

O'BRIEN, STEPHANIE P., Ph.D. *The Kids are not all Right: LGBTQIA+ Student Identity and Introductory Film Studies Curriculum*. (2020)  
Directed by Dr. Leila Villaverde. 239 pp.

In attempting to address a broad range of students, introductory film studies curriculum serves to reinforce the marginalization of certain student identities that do not conform to hegemonic ideals reinforced through traditional, canonical analysis. In this study, I argue that marginalized students perform José Esteban Muñoz's disidentification as a way to move through the traditional curriculum. Through a multi-method approach that includes content analysis, critical discourse analysis, and comparative analysis, this dissertation considers the organizational structure, language, and examples used in five mass-market, introductory film studies textbooks. The study revealed four cartographic rules of knowledge construction that guide introductory film studies curriculum. These cartographic rules illuminate how traditional, canonical, introductory film studies curriculum privileges western, white, patriarchal, heteronormative ideologies within critical film literacy. A reconsideration of the traditional, canonical approach is needed in order to provide a more inclusive and interdisciplinary curriculum. I posit a revision of the traditional, canonical view that, rather than privileging the filmmaker and filmic text as eminent maker of meaning, focuses instead on individual student meaning-making. Lastly, I provide examples, readings, and activities that move toward a more inclusive, student-centered curriculum.

THE KIDS ARE NOT ALL RIGHT: LGBTQIA+ STUDENT IDENTITY AND  
INTRODUCTORY FILM STUDIES CURRICULUM

by

Stephanie P. O'Brien

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of The Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro  
2020

Approved by

---

Committee Chair

## APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by Stephanie P. O'Brien has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair \_\_\_\_\_  
Leila Villaverde

Committee Members \_\_\_\_\_  
Silvia Bettez

\_\_\_\_\_  
Danielle Bouchard

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Acceptance by Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Final Oral Examination

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey would not have been possible without the help of dedicated mentors, colleagues, family, and friends. I am grateful for their support.

Dr. Leila Villaverde provided the valuable guidance I needed throughout my doctoral studies and this process. To my committee members, Drs. Silvia Bettez, Danielle Bouchard, and Laura Meadows, thank you for your continued support and advice.

I could not have completed this journey without the encouragement of my spouse, Jennifer.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
 CHAPTER	
I. CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	1
An Unexpected Discovery .....	6
Looking for Dorothy .....	7
Teaching Film History and Aesthetics .....	12
Research Questions .....	19
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	23
A Note on Theory.....	23
Intersections of Theory.....	28
The Politics of Identity .....	30
Disidentification .....	31
Intersectionality .....	39
Identity as Assemblages.....	41
A Venn Diagram of Feminist/Film/Queer Theory.....	55
Critical Pedagogy and Interpretive Analyses .....	68
Curriculum and Textbook Studies.....	79
Cartographies of Knowledge.....	80
LGBTQIA+ Perspectives and Introductory Curriculums .....	82
III. METHODOLOGY/METHOD.....	85
Limitations of the Methodological Process .....	89
Choosing the Texts for Analysis.....	91
Thematic Content Analysis.....	97
Critical Discourse Analysis .....	99
Construction of Knowledge.....	104
Validity .....	105
IV. ANALYTICAL FINDINGS .....	106
Introductory Film Studies and the Construction of Knowledge .....	107
Organization of Knowledge.....	109

Film Form and Meaning .....	111
Hollywood as Leader and Underdog .....	114
Hollywood History and the Privileging of Tradition.....	116
The Canonical Approach.....	130
The Aesthetic Perspective.....	131
Framing as Meaning-Making .....	132
Genre and Film Typology.....	136
Traditional Critical Analysis.....	147
A Multi-Disciplinary Curriculum .....	155
Othering Non-Canonical Perspectives .....	157
Marginalizing Language and Filmic Examples .....	165
Holistic Disparaging.....	167
Implicit and Explicit Biases .....	169
Othering Language .....	170
LGBTQIA+ Specific Language and Filmic Examples.....	177
‘Homosexual’ as an Identifying Term.....	177
Critical Analysis Examples .....	181
 V. CARTOGRAPHIES OF KNOWLEDGE IN INTRODUCTORY FILM STUDIES CURRICULUM.....	 187
Rule 1: The Process of Analytical Meaning-Making Foregrounds a Mostly White, Heteronormative, Patriarchal, Hollywood Perspective .....	 189
Rule 2: A Formal, Canonical Aesthetic Analysis is Privileged.....	193
Rule 3: The Construction of Knowledge is Multi-Disciplinary Rather Than Interdisciplinary .....	197
Rule 4: Any ‘Way of Looking’ That Does not Conform to the Traditional Canonical Analysis is Marginalized, Elided, and/or Degraded Through Language Use and Filmic Examples .....	199
Considering Students as Individuals .....	203
 VI. TOWARD A RELATIONAL AESTHETICS OF FILM STUDIES CURRICULUM.....	 206
Considering a New Curriculum .....	207
Putting it all Together.....	211
 REFERENCES.....	 231

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Instances of LGBTQIA+ Language and Examples Used and the Sections in Which Those Examples Occur .....	185
Table 2. Details of Major Critical Analyses Used in Each Textbook .....	186

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Method Process .....	96



## CHAPTER I

### CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

In November of 2016, voters in the United States elected a new administration that campaigned on a platform of fear; a nationalistic, isolationist fear of the Other. This nationalist wave has infected various countries around the world, and while this is not a new political ideology, fear based on Otherness is once again emboldened to show itself in myriad, public ways. No longer are racist, sexist, classist, homophobic ideologies residing in shadows, they dominate headlines on 24/7 cable news and are proliferate on social media outlets. Some might argue that the visibility of one's enemy is more desirable than a hidden, gestating force that attacks in small, subtle ways that may not be as recognizable. It is also a fair argument that the fear of Otherness has always been present, no matter the administration in charge. What is certain is that the renewed visibility of the attacks now raises the stakes even higher for the most vulnerable groups.

Policy changes emanating from local and federal administrations that affect the lives of LGBTQIA+ individuals have mostly been relegated to smaller headlines as issues deemed more pressing by hegemonic forces dominate the news cycle. This is not to say that the stories of individuals affected by different policy changes are not important or worthy of analysis; however, while we watch the circus playing out before us, we often ignore what is happening behind the curtain. This has been particularly true of

federal changes in policies that affect transgender individuals, most prominently the reversal of protections for transgender students (U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, 2017) and implementation of a ban on transgender individuals serving in the military (Graham, 2018). Other proposed policy changes, such as H.R. 4508, the PROSPER Act, have been introduced into the legislative process. This act includes several policies disguised as revisions to the 1965 Higher Education Act that LGBTQIA+ activists argue are discriminatory (Moreau, 2018).

Federal policy changes are not the only concerns for the LGBTQIA+ community. At the state level, conservative legislators have introduced or implemented repressive and discriminatory policies and laws for many years. Attempts to pass new acts have increased since 2016. According to the Human Rights Campaign State Equality Index (Kozuch, 2019), 239 anti-LGBTQIA+ bills were introduced at the state level between 2017 and 2018. While the HRC report found that during the same time period legislators introduced 369 bills seeking to protect or expand LGBTQIA+ rights, the continued attacks on LGBTQIA+ individual protections relays a frightening message to the LGBTQIA+ community. Many “religious freedom” cases are moving through the courts while some states are attempting to overturn the 2014 Supreme Court decision that legalized same sex marriage (General Assembly of North Carolina, 2017). In other cultural institutions, the use of homophobic slurs and stereotypes often occur, some with hastily arraigned apology statements released soon after the incidents were revealed (BET, 2017; Ziegler, 2018). Sports institutions are grappling with gender debates that walk the line of transphobic policy implementation (Layden, 2018). Of course, none of

these policy or law changes compares to the violence and death that LGBTQIA+ individuals face every day around the world (Gray, 2017; National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2017; Sopelsa, 2018). What anti-LGBTQIA+ policies, laws, and slurs do affect is the embodied, affectual state of the LGBTQIA+ individual; a thousand small cuts that can lead to bare life existence.

It is with this contextual backdrop and through the perspective of a member of the LGBTQIA+ community that I undertake this research project. I became an educator later in life; it is my second career. I was hired originally as a subject matter expert rather than someone with a background in education. I have learned a lot about being an educator “on the job” by trying new things, making mistakes, learning from those mistakes, and at times, experiencing moments of clarity and success. As someone who moved from the professional world into higher education, I am constantly learning and growing as I navigate each day. I always strive to build an inclusive curriculum and advocate for policies that protect and embolden all students. The desire to learn more and expand my knowledge of inclusive education practices have led me down my own educational path to critical pedagogy. Teaching for 10 years at a community college and currently at a public liberal arts and sciences university has provided me the opportunity to work with students that represent many marginalized groups. Both institutions reside in a southern Appalachian region where divides in socio-economic class, race, and ethnicity are evident in every sector of the community. Many of these students face challenges that hinder their education. For students from underrepresented groups, this challenge is even greater. While my goal as an educator is to provide spaces that are empowering for all

students, especially those from marginalized communities, my focus here is on LGBTQIA+ students. There is a connection I feel with some experiences of LGBTQIA+ students because I identify as lesbian; however, I will not ever be able to completely know each of their journeys, especially because as a white university lecturer, I live within many privileges.

Centering this study on the LGBTQIA+ student also stems from years of teaching media studies and witnessing the historical shift in how introductory textbooks have begun to incorporate some marginalized voices while continuing to elide others. For LGBTQIA+ media makers, especially those who also are artists of color, the struggle for representation on a wider scale within the mass media and, therefore, these introductory textbooks is continual. This is not to say that representations for other marginalized groups are anywhere near what they should be in these textbooks, but when media makers identify as members of several underrepresented groups, they are at a greater disadvantage of being included in the discussion of media history and aesthetics. I have come to realize that while we often focus on the larger view of changes in educational contexts, such as the policy changes implemented by the current federal administration, we often forget that smaller, localized choices can implement harm that might not be as recognizable. These choices can inflict pain we did not intend, even by those of us who have experienced this pain in the past. While this study may seem like a minor, extremely particular project, my hope is that it could lead to considerations of conducting this kind of research in other contexts.

Teaching film and media studies courses has been the focus of my work for the past 13 years. During those years, I have struggled to find one comprehensive textbook that speaks to the ways in which I wish to approach my courses—as an interdisciplinary, multiple-identity-concerned curriculum. As I examined introductory text after introductory text sent to me each semester by eager textbook representatives from major publishing houses, I became ever more dismayed at the normative, neo-liberal construction of knowledge put forth by the authors of these textbooks. Having always thought of myself as open minded and socially conscious, I have been surprised at what I have failed to see in various curriculum resources and textbooks now that I view them through the lens of critical pedagogy and feminist inquiry. I began to pay much closer attention to how the introductory textbooks I was using, or had used in the past, were written from the particular perspectives of the authors and the canonical tradition.

A critic of my findings in this study might ask, “Why not require additional books since there are several textbooks that specifically discuss queer theory and film?” I would argue that first, this is cost prohibitive and unfair for students, especially the students who have been in my classrooms. They are often financial aid or loan recipients and many work to help put themselves through school. The other important answer is that this requirement reinforces the point I attempt to make in this project: that by not integrating the theories, perspectives, and work of LGBTQIA+ film scholars and filmmakers in an interdisciplinary way, introductory film studies continues to marginalize their voices. Asking first year film or general education students to buy a textbook that focuses solely on queer film studies, or feminist film theory, or critical race film studies reinforces the

“othering” of these theories within the traditional film studies curriculum. What is needed is a curriculum that responds to fluid identities, written in an interdisciplinary manner that speaks to many individual ways of seeing.

### **An Unexpected Discovery**

I can never thank you enough Ms. Arzner for the many things you taught me, all of which helped me through the next 50 years of my career and for your prediction that gave me the confidence to go on and become a film director. Thank you. (Coppola, as cited in Chuba, 2018, para. 7)

The conscious raising experience that prompted me to question the introductory textbooks I used occurred early in my doctoral studies. While writing a paper on women in film, I encountered a name I had never heard of prior to conducting this research. In four years of undergraduate and two years of master’s work in media studies, I was never introduced to the filmmaker, Dorothy Arzner. Once I read more about her, I decided to focus the paper on her erasure from film history texts. I embarked on an analysis of 13 introduction to film studies textbooks as I searched for information on Arzner. That case study pushed me to examine introductory film studies textbooks more in depth for the current project. I recount a summarized version of the original case study here as an example of one marginalized voice out of many.

## Looking for Dorothy<sup>1</sup>

If one was going to be in this movie business, one should be a director because he was the one who told everyone else what to do. In fact, he was the “whole works.” (Arzner, as cited in Kay & Peary, 2011, para. 9)

If we were to ask cinephiles or film students to name the most prolific female director<sup>2</sup> of early cinema, one would doubt that they could. Many might name Alice Guy Blache, Lois Weber, or Ida Lupino—women who have been written about within film history texts. However, while these women deserve their due, they are not the most successful female filmmakers from the beginnings of film. Why might Dorothy Arzner be left out of the discourse of early cinema history and aesthetics? Is it because she was labeled as a “female director”? Is it because she followed classic cinema conventions as a for-hire director during the beginnings of the studio system and, thus, is not viewed as an innovator? Is it because she presented a very androgynous mode of dress and personal appearance? Is it because she was a lesbian? Perhaps it is all of these; perhaps it is none of these. *Why* is not the point though, the effects of her erasure are what matter. Of the 13 introductory film studies textbooks I examined in this original case study, four included Arzner. Three only mention her name in a paragraph with other female filmmakers; the fourth actually included, wait for it... an entire sentence about Arzner’s work. None of the texts included a photograph of Arzner. One textbook—of which I read a review but have not examined—Pam Cook’s (1999) *The Cinema Book*, may very well

---

<sup>1</sup> I borrow this title from Judith Mayne’s (1994) chapter, “Looking for Dorothy Arzner” in her book, *Directed by Dorothy Arzner*. Mayne, of course in turn, has borrowed the title from Isaac Julien’s *Looking for Langston*.

cover Arzner in more detail as Cook was instrumental during the 1970s for bringing recognition to Arzner's work.<sup>2</sup> However, without the ability to check the text in-person, I could not truly speak to what coverage may or may not reside in Cook's text. It is telling that nine of the leading texts would fail to mention Arzner at all. Arzner has been erased both in written and visual form from the history of classical Hollywood cinema according to most of these introductory film textbooks.

If not for the feminist theorists of the 1970s, Arzner's work might not be recognized at all for the significant attributes she presents for early film history. Arzner is the most prolific female filmmaker of any period of Hollywood cinema, including the present. She successfully moved from silent to sound cinema, becoming the first director to helm a "talkie" for Paramount Pictures. Arzner also contributed a significant technological contribution to film history. She was reportedly not happy with the constraints that sound enacted on the movement of the actors and camera. Early uses of sound required the camera to sit in a large soundproof booth due to the noise of the film magazine as it rolled through the camera. A frustrated Arzner had technicians rig a microphone on a fish pole that hung overhead so that the actors could move more freely, thus creating the first boom microphone, a necessity today on any film production (Mayne, 1994). One wonders where the industry would be without this advancement. Would someone else have thought of it? Probably. But given the fact that other

---

<sup>2</sup> See Pam Cook's (1975) "Approaching the Work of Dorothy Arzner" in *The Work of Dorothy Arzner: Toward a Feminist Cinema*, Claire Johnston, Ed. London: British Film Institute.



technological developments are often cited and attributed to male filmmakers in introductory texts, it seems odd that this important innovation is overlooked.

As the quote by award winning filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola shows, Arzner's time as a film professor at UCLA later in life had a profound effect on the director's skills and belief in his ability to be a director. The "prediction" Coppola mentions in the quote refers to a time when he doubted his career trajectory. He encountered Arzner on the UCLA campus in passing one evening. The film pioneer told Coppola that night, "You'll make it, I know. I've been around and I know" (as cited in Chuba, 2018, para. 6). The majority of popular articles I read while conducting this case study included quotes from Coppola on the influence of Arzner, the director and teacher, as well as Arzner the person, on his life and career. Along with the feminist film theorist of the 1970s, Coppola has been and continues to be a staunch advocate for more recognition of Arzner's work and contributions to the industry. In many film textbooks, directors who are considered auteurs, of which Coppola is one, are often discussed in connection to the influences on their styles. These directors' backgrounds and aesthetic choices are analyzed according to contextual elements such as film schools and directorial mentors. Yet no textbook discussions of Coppola's work that I have read include his deep connection to and appreciation of Arzner as a teacher and practitioner. Leaving out this small yet significant piece of information serves to further erase the important role Arzner continues to have on the film landscape today. Arzner should not be overlooked, not just because she was a lesbian filmmaker but because she was and continues to be a well-respected practitioner and teacher of filmic arts.

The quote that begins this section, from an interview that Arzner gave to scholars Karyn Kay and Gerald Peary (2011) over several months in 1974, speaks to the binary division of labor in the studio system. Though several women directed films in the early years of the film industry, by the late 1920s men had taken over these positions. Arzner's perseverance through this time period stems not only from her talent but also from her mediation of the male space she occupied. A majority of images available of Arzner show her in suits, often with ties and button-down shirts. Her hair is short and slicked back in a slight wave, more in the style of a man than the jazz-age bob popular with women at the time. Arzner's blending of gender and sexuality in the performative mode of dress allowed for a negotiation of the heteronormative patriarchal system that kept her constrained within the classical narrative and cinematic language of the studio system (Mayne, 1994). In Arzner we can see an example of what José Muñoz (1999) defines as disidentification, which

is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship. (p. 4)

In early Hollywood's studio system, women were confined to "women's jobs" such as script typists, wardrobe, or hair/make-up stylists. To adapt in the patriarchal world of directing, Arzner performed Muñoz's disidentification as a form of agency. Through mode of dress and female-focused narratives in her films, Arzner positioned herself as part of the male sphere yet outside of it as well. Thematic representations of women's sexuality and lived experiences are evident across Arzner's filmography. These themes in

pre-code Hollywood deal subversively with lesbianism, women involved in extra-marital affairs, and women struggling to make ends meet during the Depression. Themes of women's community and female sexuality and Arzner's relationship to these issues have been the foundation of the debate about her legacy as a director. To be successful as a director in the early era of film, Arzner's personal and professional personas blended to allow for a performative negotiation of a male dominated career. Arzner jolted the system from within to displace majoritarian perspectives by employing subversive tactics.

Arzner's films and persona have been appropriated and negotiated over several decades by feminist theorists and lesbian spectators. She has presented a persona and filmography that can be read as a historical look at early film history; a queer history of film; a feminist history of film; a negotiator of the industrial complex of the patriarchal, heteronormative studio system; and as an innovator of technological features of filmmaking. Unfortunately, students in introductory film courses will not know Arzner, nor negotiate her work and identity for themselves unless an instructor goes beyond the covers of the introductory texts to provide experiences for these students that might allow them to identify with a historical figure that might be more like them.

If a white, lesbian filmmaker is left out of the discussion of early film history and aesthetics, we know that other voices are missing as well. Introductory film texts are woefully lacking in showcasing filmmakers of color, especially queer filmmakers of color. If we were to only read these texts, we would assume that few African American, Asian American, or Native American filmmakers existed prior to the 1960s. If they are included, it is usually in a separate section on "Race/Ethnicity in Film." How then can we

find these voices as well? How can we allow for a space within the film curriculum that illuminates their contributions? What would an introductory text look like that considers all voices and contributions equally?

As an educator concerned with fostering equality, who identifies as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, I undertook this current research project in hopes that a more inclusive film studies curriculum might be realized. If an important figure like Dorothy Arzner is missing from the majority of introductory film studies textbooks, then which other filmmakers and filmic representations have been left out of the discussion? What does this omission of certain voices tell us about traditional film studies curriculum?

### **Teaching Film History and Aesthetics**

A brief review of the circumstances surrounding the proliferation of film courses across the academy is necessary to perhaps illuminate the conflation of cultural hegemonic principles and those of the film industry in the construction of these courses and, by extension, film programs and degrees. For a more detailed look at film history and the rise of film studies in the academy see any of the history chapters of the textbooks examined for this project as well as Cook (2016), Wexman (2009), and Polan (2007).

The first national film schools emerged not long after the technology of the moving image became a form of entertainment and communication at the turn of the twentieth century. The most prolific of these—from the Soviet Union and Germany—provided theoretical and propagandistic foundations for the spreading of imperialistic and

colonial ideologies as well as a form for protesting these ideological forces. Though not a national film school, the United States' turn toward economic stabilization of the fledging industry through the building of a patriarchal, heteronormative studio system put in to place classical narrative structures and cinematic language that would serve to promote the value of a national identity built on individualistic struggles and jingoistic philosophies.

Cinematic movements spread through Europe as early film industries in the United Kingdom, France, and Italy became more aligned with national identity as a result of funding by their respective governments. The majority of the leaders of film schools were intellectuals and artists who were bound to the government through necessity for goods and permission to use state-owned equipment. Subversive filmmakers attempted to produce work that could be read against the national propaganda machine and, for certain periods of time, they were successful. Ultimately due to lack of funding or changes in audience habits, these subversive movements were overcome by narratives, genres, or techniques that aligned more closely to the ruling government party at the time. Nations of the Middle East, Africa and Asia started small industries that often struggled under colonial rule due to lack of resources and availability of distribution as films of the colonizing nations took up space in what few viewing venues existed. During the periods of WWI and WWII, European film industries struggled to produce works due to the lack of materials and services. The United States' domination of world film markets proliferated during these years, setting up an economic and ideological machine that continues to spread the hegemonic messages of western societies. (Cook, 2016).

In the 1950s and 60s, with the rebuilding of Europe, came second waves of film movements. This time, however, most of the filmmakers had grown up watching films exported from the United States or the few films from European and Soviet pre-war cinemas that were still available for viewing during WWI and WWII. Many of these young intellectuals—mostly white, male, and members of the dominant class—idolized the filmmakers from these countries and began to incorporate their cinematic structures and language into their own films. In particular, the Italian and French New Waves would spawn a rise in intellectual discussions of the art of film and influence a new generation of filmmakers in the United States. By canonizing certain films and directors, the French New Wave filmmakers in particular provided the context through which most introductory film classes are taught today. Andrew Sarris (2009), an American film critic who moved to Paris and became part of the intellectual movement that inspired the French New Wave, wrote a seminal article, “Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962,” that introduced the idea of the filmmaker as artist and author of the film. Though this theory has been debated over the years, it is still relied on heavily as the basis for which filmmakers and films are considered worthy of intellectual study. The directors that Sarris argues are auteurs in his article and later writings are all white, majority male, from westernized cultures, and also presumed heterosexual, at least according to the histories that we recount of their lives.

The writings of Sarris and films by the new wave directors inspired a young generation of American filmmakers, again male, mostly white, and presumed heterosexual, who learned their craft in newly appointed film schools. Though the

University of Southern California had established a film school in 1929, it focused mainly on the technical aspects of the new industry, feeding the studio system with technicians and directors (USC Cinematic Arts, 2016). By the mid-1960s, universities across the United States added courses and degrees in the study of film, not just as a technical medium, but also as a cultural institution and artistic endeavor worthy of theoretical, aesthetic, legal, and economic study. Across higher education, film course offerings in 1959 numbered less than 300, by 1980 there were over 7,500 course listings taught by over 3,000 new faculty hires (Wexman, 2009). The first American “film school brats,” as they came to be known, were instrumental in what some scholars consider a creative and artistic revival in film during the 1970s. As the French New Wave writers had retrospectively granted authority to filmmakers of the first 50 years of cinema, scholars today look back on the 1970s as the beginning of a rise in new American auteurs.<sup>3</sup> These same scholars attended university film schools and, as such, are all influenced by the works of the first professors of film who were mostly male, industry professionals and European critics (Cook, 2016). It was not until feminist theorists began writing about the problematic role of the portrayal of women in film that new voices arrived.

Feminist film theorists, notably Molly Haskell, Laura Mulvey, Pam Cook, and Claire Johnston, presented scholarly works that debated the psychoanalytical effects of the “male gaze” on the female audience member. Mulvey (1975) in particular theorized

---

<sup>3</sup> The most famous “film school” or “movie brats” are usually cited as: Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese. Though not all of them completed university programs (Spielberg dropped out before completing his degree).

that female characters in film are fetishized through the patriarchal structure of cinematic language that forces the female spectator to identify with the male protagonist in the visual pleasure of gazing upon the female body. Other feminist theorists built upon or challenged Mulvey's ideas. Though these feminist theorists presented a new voice in film studies, the majority of their work concentrated on and served to further the white, patriarchal, heteronormative perspective even though they argued against its effects. Other feminist and critical race scholars offered various takes on Mulvey's work, in particular bell hooks (1992), whose writings on the "oppositional gaze" of black female spectators argues that the gaze for women of color has always been through a political lens. While these scholars' works were influential at the time, they and their detractors are largely left out of introductory film textbooks. It should not come as much of a surprise to learn that hooks's scholarship is not mentioned at all in the textbooks I consider in this study. Some texts mention the work of feminist film scholars in passing as part of a historical timeframe in film studies, but few give them more than a brief mention. When their work is discussed, it is sectioned off in an organizational structure that positions their scholarship as *alternative* ways to make meaning. Their works are not used in introductory textbooks as the predominant way to analyze the film canon.

Following the feminist theorists in the 1970s, the work of scholars Richard Dyer, Alexander Doty, and B. Ruby Rich, along with journalist Vito Russo, introduced Queer Theory to the study of cinema. These works argued that LGBTQIA+ individuals had been marginalized in film and that the heteronormative structure of cinema narratives and language served to promote homophobia. The documentary derived from Russo's book,



*The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (1981), still serves as a foundational, though somewhat dated and debated, documentary for the study of queer cinema. With some advancement in the representation of LGBTQIA+ experiences in film, Rich (2013) coined the term, New Queer Cinema, in the 1990s to describe the proliferation of independent films that focused on these identities. Again, however, like the feminist film movement, queer cinema theory is often marginalized in introductory film texts, garnering a small section but not used in the majoritarian analysis of the films held in the highest esteem by scholars and historians. Many of the scholars mentioned in this section also write from a perspective of white privilege, an overarching theme discussed later in this project.

What do I mean when I refer to a “traditional canonical analysis” as the foundation of film studies in the academy? Based on the brief history just provided, traditional analysis is rooted in a particular perspective stemming from a male, white, European lens. This type of film analysis is often called “classical” and divided into camps of formalism and realism (Corrigan & White, 2018). These formalist and realist perspectives frequently utilize canonical films, often directed by Sarris’s (2009) auteurs, as examples for analysis. These accepted canonical films stem from years of debate and analysis in critical film studies scholarship. They have been delineated and agreed upon by the very white, patriarchal, heteronormative perspectives that permeated early film studies. These are the films that most often end up on “best-of lists”.

Formalist scholars are concerned with the form of cinema, the “unique capabilities of cinema—such as camera movement and distance and shot relation and

rhythm—to find meaning in the work itself” (Corrigan & White, 2018, p. 382).

Formalists analyze the aesthetic aspects of technical and narrative choices made by filmmakers. Realist scholars, as the name implies, are concerned with the representation of reality and the questions that surround film as a moving, auditory, and visual medium. Realism, as akin to “mimesis, or imitation of reality in the arts” shares the aesthetic value of realistic representation as valued by the ancient Greeks (p. 384).

As I discuss later, one of the textbooks I analyzed is completely rooted in formalism, while the others attempt to straddle both classical theories and, in a couple of instances, add to these with updated theoretical concepts. Corrigan and White (2018), authors of one of the textbooks analyzed in this project, delineate the difference between the two branches of classical film theory, “If the formalist saw the film screen as akin to a picture frame, the realists saw it as a window” (p. 384). When I refer to traditional or classical or canonical film studies, at times using mixtures of all of these words, I am referring to the formalist and realist traditions.

As the development of film studies in the academy reveals, hegemonic ideologies are reinforced while historically marginalized voices and bodies are continually left on the borders or in the case of some texts, erased all together. These voices are given a place in smaller film courses that focus particularly on feminist or queer studies for students usually already aware of and interested in the work of these theorists. If, however, we are to bring those voices out of the celluloid closet or shadows<sup>4</sup> and keep

---

<sup>4</sup> I use the word “shadows” here in addition to closet as explained by Karma Chavez (2013) in her book, *Queer Migration Politics* to elucidate the difference between the closet and the shadow in terms of racialized connotations of each term. Chavez argues that a review of the etymology and subsequent usage of each word in queer and immigration politics shows an inherent racialized difference, “While similar in

their work relevant and necessary, we must include them more substantially in the larger introductory courses that are often part of a general education core, which includes students from other areas of the college or university. These bodies and voices should be seen and heard by all who come into contact with the cultural institution of film, not just those who will go on to study or make films.

### **Research Questions**

Arzner's erasure and my doctoral journey led me to re-examine the textbook I use in my Introduction to Film course. What I had initially discovered from a cursory review while searching for Arzner has prompted me to change how I approach the course and informs the initial research questions I embark upon for this project. I found myself contemplating how my undergraduate and master's studies had served to marginalize my experiences within film studies textbooks and how I have then continued this marginalization of students who identify as LGBTQIA+ in my film courses. As well, during my time as an educator, I have encountered students, health professionals, advocates, and scholars who have expanded my knowledge on the range of sexuality and gender identity. Two transgender students who were enrolled in my classes, shared their experiences with me and their classmates. In particular, one student who enrolled in three of my courses, taught me a great deal about the process and struggle of transitioning. Over the three years he was a student at the college he completed the first steps of his transition journey and began to write about the experience. His work has grown into

---

some ways, closets, then, carry less rhetorical baggage than shadows" (Chavez, 2013, p. 91). It is evident in Russo's (1981) book and Epstein and Freedman's (1995) subsequent documentary that their focus is on those whose connection to "coming out" would be the closet rather than the shadows. Those who reside in the shadows face even more violent erasures in cinematic text than those of the closet.

advocacy, and I continue to follow his writing and journey. My interactions with this student, and other students in my classes who identified as gender non-conforming, pansexual, and queer, led me to further question the examples that I have used throughout my courses. I realized that often when using examples, I would reflect only my experience by using filmic artifacts that conformed to one small, narrow view of LGBTQIA+ experiences. This self-reflection has led me to investigate questions of ranges of identity and experiences in discussions of sexuality and gender.

In considering how these textbooks present LGBTQIA+ voices and address LGBTQIA+ students, I ask two larger questions and three sub-questions. Each of these questions opens up considerations of how LGBTQIA+ students might relate to film studies curriculum based on the use of these textbooks. I am interested in how we construct meaning and negotiate our identities through our relationships with media texts. I attempt to consider elements that speak to how dominant ideologies are presented and thus how students who do not conform to these westernized, heteronormative narratives might navigate a traditional film studies curriculum as a way to engage in a relationship with media texts.

Presented here are the research questions that guided my project. As a critical pedagogue whose research is influenced by feminist inquiry, I approached these questions as conduits to opening up possibilities that allowed for a rhizomatic process (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). I was open to lines of inquiry that did not foreclose the possibility of multiple answers or answers that were non-definitive. As I discuss in various other areas of this project, I did not wish to approach these questions by already

assuming I knew the answers. This was perhaps the most difficult aspect of the project. As an attempt to rethink the ways in which I have been taught and continued then to teach, I am rewiring my instructor/learning self as both a reflexive and corrective exercise.

Question one and its sub-questions seek to analyze the ways in which student identity is interwoven within the cartographic rules that construct knowledge (Alexander & Mohanty, 2010) in traditional film studies curriculum.

RQ1: How does traditional canonical film study position and address the film student?

SQ 1: Which cartographic rules of knowledge construction as related to identification practices are present within traditional film studies?

SQ 2: What does this reveal about how identity is understood and constructed by such traditional canonical analysis?

Question two and its sub-question moves the analysis conducted for question one into a critical pedagogical praxis interested in reducing the oppression of marginalized voices, in particular for this study, LGBTQIA+ identities in introductory film studies curriculum.

RQ2: How can theories that present identity through the lenses of disidentification, assemblage, and relational aesthetics help to analyze traditional canonical film studies, as well as provide alternatives to such analysis?

SQ1: Which theoretical foundations, filmic examples, and activities would an introductory film studies curriculum focused on student meaning-making and relational aesthetics include?

The following chapters detail the research project. Chapter II reviews the literature most pertinent to the study. Chapter III introduces the methodology and method utilized. Chapter IV presents the findings from my analysis as I sought to answer the research questions. Chapter V reveals cartographies of knowledge present in introductory film studies. Finally, Chapter VI presents my attempt to move toward a more inclusive film studies curriculum based on an interdisciplinary perspective focused on theories of identification and relational aesthetics.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This project situates itself at the intersection of several categories of theory and literature. Because this project is interdisciplinary in nature, this literature review could cover every discipline central to and tangentially linked to a critical pedagogue and feminist perspective, but this task would become unwieldy. What follows is instead an attempt to cover literature narrowly specific to this particular study. The review provided here is meant to inform the methodology and method chapter that follows, and some overlap is expected.

#### **A Note on Theory**

As evident in the following literature review, this project is concerned with questions about the relationship between identity and cultural texts. The underlying theoretical foundations of the categories of literature are interwoven within the discussion below. However, one broad theoretical perspective provides, for me, a connection between the authors in the review. Though most of the scholars do not necessarily point to this theoretical perspective, I find that when I consider questions of identity and relationality, I return to my interest in Aesthetics and what/who is considered to possess value and how ideals of value are challenged by the relational aspect of an encounter. I will delineate Aesthetics as a theory by capitalization, aesthetics as lower case, refers to the formal aspects of filmic techniques (e.g., cinematography, sound, editing).

Aesthetics, as I employ the theoretical considerations, encompasses all aspects of relations—between art and spectator, between teacher and student, between individuals. The development of my use of Aesthetic concepts is also now influenced by the work of many of the scholars delineated here, in particular the scholars whose work focuses on assemblages of identity. These scholars caution new researchers about the history of the grand theories as singular, universalizing, heteronormative, white, and European in their perspectives. These grand theories are most often the foundations of study in survey courses where they “are granted a conceptual *carte blanche*, while those uttered from the purview of minority discourse that speak to the same questions are almost exclusively relegated to the jurisdiction of ethnographic locality” (Weheliye, 2014, p. 6). My experience as a graduate student confirms this historical marginalizing of certain theoretical perspectives. Only by enrolling in courses that were devoted to highlighting the voices of scholars working along the boundaries of the academy did I learn that there were authors writing about my experiences. With the understanding that grand theories leave out certain voices, they do still provide the beginning questions that open up conversations and debates. They construct the barriers to push against and eventually knock down and rebuild in ways that encompass all voices. Critical pedagogy and feminist inquiry are central in reconceptualizing grand theories.

Centralizing the lived experience is paramount to the work of a critical pedagogue, especially one whose interest lies in media studies. Each of our daily lives is inundated with media. We cannot escape it. Aesthetics allows for multiple understandings of these experiences. Whether the experience is engagement with art,



with education, with an imaginative world, or with nature, Aesthetics presents philosophical ideals of subjectivity that account for meaning-making as individualized and contextual. John Dewey and Maxine Greene are often cited within the study of Aesthetic educational experiences through their assertions that imagination, perception, emotion, intellect, and consciousness be engaged in a holistic manner in activities that allow for student meaning-making that does not insist on “correct answers” (Greiner, 2009). Aesthetics, when combined with critical thought brings to the forefront the interaction between spectator and art in whatever form the content of that art takes. When we or our students are engaged with the struggle to make meaning from an image, performance, or act, we encounter the art in its entirety—its content, form, and history along with our subjectivity, which at times (many times) may encompass new ways of seeing and being with the world and others in not only pleasurable but sometimes difficult encounters.

Aesthetics is also engaged in the politics of what is defined as beauty and who is allowed to define it as such. Rancière (2009) speaks to the politics of aesthetics when explicating what he deems as three regimes of art: ethical, representational, and aesthetic. Each regime reflects the politics of labor and utility of art to society through a combination of historical and philosophical analyses of art form. Ethical regime reflects art as utilization for society, representational regime reflects art as elevated to bourgeois status, and aesthetic regime as art which is a singular event and relational in its context. Within each regime, the politics of differentiation and who is allowed to know and speak defines the meaning-making of art. Rancière (2009) explains,

More precisely, then, the relationship between aesthetics and politics consists in the relationship between this aesthetics of politics and the ‘politics of aesthetics’—in other words in the way in which the practices and forms of visibility of art themselves intervene in the distribution of the sensible and its reconfiguration, in which they distribute spaces and times, subjects and objects, the common and the singular. (p. 25)

The political as intertwined with Aesthetics reflects concepts of power and privilege, where ideas of labor, capital, and beauty often intermingle in contentious debate over what and who has value. The politics of Aesthetics presents space and distance in which to question subjectivity and dominant ideologies in the process of meaning-making. Marcuse (1978) delineates our relationship to art, “A work of art is authentic or true not by virtue of its content (i.e., the ‘correct’ representation of social conditions), nor by its ‘pure’ form, but by the content having become form” (p. 8). The engagement with the work of art by a subject within a politics of culture brings forth meaning in a specific context. This viewing or engagement, to paraphrase Dewey, cannot be recreated as it exists within a historical, embodied experience (Greiner, 2009). This experience in turn exists within a political and historical realm.

A historical consideration of the changing ideas of the subject is at the heart of understanding why Aesthetic theories have moved from Greek ideals of appreciation of cultural beauty and a moral life to the appearance of the decentered and fractured postmodern subject. Evolving considerations of the subject as it relates to the move toward identity as assemblages of encounters is an intriguing advancement at the intersection of identity studies and Aesthetics. Connections between identity and Aesthetics reside within Nicholas Bourriaud’s (2002) concept of relational aesthetics

where “the beholder is the joint creator of the work” (p. 99). Bourriaud also speaks to the universal subject, which is often the focus of media audience studies,

The audience concept must not be mythicized—the idea of a unified “mass” has more to do with a Fascist aesthetic than with these momentary experiences, where everyone has to hang on to his/her identity. ... The aura of contemporary art is free association. (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 61)

Relational Aesthetics, where the subject is engaged in meaning-making with an artistic, educational, or environmental encounter, challenges us to consider our own fractured identity and the fractured identity of students in the ways in which we build curriculum, choose textual and visual artifacts for analysis, and prepare assignments for assessment. My focus on the embodiment of experience as it relates to critical pedagogy stems from constant attempts to undo westernized practices of looking and meaning-making within media studies.

By asking questions about the organization, language, and examples used in these textbooks my hope is that we can examine new ways of meaning-making that weave all identities into the overall narrative of film studies. In thinking about how these textbooks are assembled, how they are organized around national, historical or aesthetic properties, we can illuminate the ways in which marginalized voices are *othered* through a construction of knowledge that continues to hold up westernized ideologies as the *correct* way to analyze filmic texts. Throughout the literature review, I ask questions that might be considered more particular sub-questions of these overarching concerns and the guiding research questions.

## **Intersections of Theory**

Prior to this project, the majority of research that I conducted incorporated the usual suspects of theoretical foundations for scholarly work in media: semiotics, psychoanalysis, Montage theory, Marxism, auteur theory, and in a limited amount, feminist theory. These theoretical views and the literature that explains and expands upon them will always impact the way I look at any aspect of film studies. I was not, at the time, overly engaged in the meaning-making process as it relates to our identities and our relationships with media texts. While this proposed study could be accomplished using any of the afore-mentioned theoretical foundations, I have chosen to blend previous scholarship with new literature that has continued to expand my knowledge on the confluence of education, identity, and media studies. If I claim to hope for a new way of looking at and teaching film studies that is interdisciplinary, then I must undertake an interdisciplinary approach to the research I embark upon here. As such, for this project, I focus on the intersections of scholarly work that align with my current concerns: identity politics, feminist/film/queer theory, and interpretive analysis/critical pedagogy. All of the authors discussed are in some way indebted to various grand theories through advancement, rejection, revision, or counter theorizing. So, while foundational grand theories and various media studies theories are not delineated here, they are the ghosts haunting the proposed research and my scholarship.

The very nature of the relationship between student identity and large survey textbooks is grounded more in economic factors for a publisher/author than perhaps a more inclusive, diverse, or interdisciplinary focus I hope for in my search. As a business

that seeks to maximize profit, publishers of large survey textbooks must address a unified student subject. In an attempt to do so, these texts often follow prescriptive patterns of established consistency in the market. The organizational structure, filmic examples, and visual representations are carefully chosen to supposedly present a wide range of possibilities. These choices, however, are grounded in the ideal of a neoliberal student subject; one who conforms to the “imperialist, white-supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal,” political structure as defined by hooks (2010, p. 105). To this political structure, we could add many other adjectives depending on our various research interests. For my purposes in this study, I would add heteronormative, though that may be implied within the other descriptives.

Before delving into a review of relevant literature on identity, first it is important to explain why the terms subjectivity and identity are discussed in ways that appear to be intermingled for the scholars I highlight as opposed to the separation of a neoliberal subject and one’s individual identity. Norma Alarcón (1991) poses the question, “Do we have to make a subject of the whole world?” (p. 145) in her seminal work, *The Theoretical Subjects of This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminism*. Alarcón’s question speaks to the ways in which subjectivity has been debated, constructed, and deconstructed over years of European theoretical discourse. The focus of Alarcón’s question centers upon the ways that feminist scholars had marginalized all forms of difference in subservience of gender, thus reinforcing the universal experience of woman. The subject of Anglo-American feminism, for Alarcón, cannot be all encompassing because the epistemological project reinforces marginalizing practices “by

forgetting or refusing to take into account that we are culturally constituted in and through language in complex ways” (p. 149). If we are all interpellated in various ways, then subjectivity cannot be separated from identities tied up in differences of race, class, nationality, gender, etc.

The authors that I detail in the first section of the literature review consider various ways in which identity is connected to, entangled with, or in refusal of grand concepts of the subject. Identity can present various paths that in/form our relation to subjectivity (Muñoz, 1999). Neither subjectivity nor identity can be separated from the visual of the flesh and the time, space, or sonic context of the encounter (Weheliye, 2003, 2014). Attempting to configure a stable subject or identity is a project that remains tied to the unifying practices of trying to name and, therefore, “presume the automatic primacy and singularity of the disciplinary subject and its identarian interpellation” (Puar, 2007, p. 206). Subjectivity and identity are relational, unstable, and reliant upon engagement within a situation. For my purposes, and the reason my work is influenced by the authors in this chapter, debates about separating subjectivity from identity are not paramount. The discourse surrounding the two concepts is instead part of the process used to arrive at what I hope is the outcome of this project: a new consideration of the student as an assemblage of relational encounters rather than a unified or intersectional being for which policies, curriculum, or textbooks can be written in a traditional sense.

### **The Politics of Identity**

Foundational theories of subjectivity and identity permeate various academic discourses, e.g., Silverman (1983, 1992), psychoanalysis; Butler (1990, 1993),

linguistics; Metz (1975) and Mulvey (1975, 1981), film theory; Crenshaw (1991), law. Three that inform my analysis of introductory texts and my experiences as both an instructor and student stem from more recent works that advance scholarship on intersectionality. José Esteban Muñoz (1999), Jasbir Puar (2007), and Alexander Weheliye (2014) theorize subjects whose identities are wrapped up not only in the various intersections that can be named but also within the complexities of a postmodern world that interpellates each of us in varying ways on different levels; we do not all answer Althusser's police officer in the same way, in the same time, or space. Muñoz (1999) provides a consideration of the relational aspects of identity and the public sphere; while Weheliye (2014) and Puar (2007) push back against an identity politics that can be easily defined as interwoven parts of ourselves to argue that identification practices are connected to our ontological, resistive, and future selves.

### **Disidentification**

For the purposes of my research, Muñoz (1999) presents an argument for a resistive reading of media examples by queer students, one which I believe these students employ when engaged with introductory film textbooks—disidentification. In analyzing the language and examples used in these texts, I reflect upon this resistive reading strategy, mentioned briefly in the previous Dorothy Arzner case study, which Muñoz describes as a means of survival for those individuals whose identities reside on the margins of society. Disidentification represents a third strategy for those who do not follow the two paths presented in most queer theoretical works: assimilation or radical counter-narratives. Through a lens of performance studies, Muñoz advances Butler's

(1993) discussion of disidentification in *Bodies that Matter*, to argue that this third strategy recognizes both the normative and exclusionary properties of meaning and thus allows for an empowering of marginalized identities as they rework and revise cultural texts. By revising the meaning of these cultural texts, marginalized identities repurpose the texts in ways that provide a path of survival and agency.

Perhaps part of what draws me to Muñoz's writings are my own memories of practicing disidentification for years as a student and consumer of the world of media. In the introduction to his book, Muñoz recounts a memory of seeing Truman Capote on a televised talk show where the young "pre-out" Muñoz "was completely terrified by the swishy spectacle of Capote's performance" yet remembers feeling "a deep pleasure in hearing Capote make language, in 'getting' the fantastic bitchiness" where the experience of viewing Capote was "as exhilarating as it was terrifying" (p. 4). Muñoz admits to the reader that in researching the exact source for this memory, he finds that the program actually aired eight years before he was born. This memory, whether from reading about Capote's appearance or seeing a re-airing of it during his childhood, represents for Muñoz ways in which disidentification acts as a path of agency, "My memory and subjectivity reformatted that memory, letting it work within my own internal narratives of subject formation" (p. 4). I, too, experienced a similar revelation.

In April of 1997, Ellen DeGeneres came out as her character on her eponymous television series and in her personal life. Like Muñoz's (1999) memory of Capote, I vividly remember the famous two-episode arc, though I cannot say for sure that I watched it as it originally aired. My guess is that I did not because of the contextual



elements of my life during that time. I believe a revisionist memory is at work in this instance since I use the “coming out episode” as a media example in various classes I teach.

I had been working in the film industry for seven years in 1997 and was, in April of that year, an assistant director on a large budget film that took up the majority of my time. I too, like Muñoz (1999), was in my “pre-out consciousness” (p. 4); my coming out, came out late, at 32. I remember specifically the issue of *Time* magazine with Ellen on the cover circulating through the film crew. I was fiercely drawn to the magazine, yet recoiled at the same time, exhilarated and terrified. I remember resisting direct conversations about the episode, though this was hard to do since the news coverage permeated every aspect of media. I would sneak looks at whatever news coverage I could, feeling shame yet comfort in doing so, not ready to be publicly seen as even interested in the topic of coming out. I felt connected to the character and the actress, while also repelled by what I had been feeling for years but repressing because of the religious and heteronormative world of my childhood—I was sure that I knew no one like me, no one going through what I was experiencing. As Ellen faced severe backlash and the cancellation of her series and endorsements, I had no hesitation in backing her and denouncing what I saw as a large injustice. In doing so I performed the disidentifying agency that Muñoz speaks to, though it did not force me to come out myself. It was disidentification as a “survival strategy that works within and outside the dominant public sphere simultaneously” (Muñoz, 1999, p. 5). Eighteen years after my own coming out and pointing to the moment of Ellen’s coming out as a partial force behind the eventual

voicing of my sexuality, I read Muñoz's work and understand that this one experience of disidentification is not the only one, for me or for others. But, as with Muñoz's reflection of his memory "through the dark glasses of adulthood," I too "am beginning to understand why I needed that broadcast and memory of that performance, which I may or may not have actually seen, to be part of my self" (p. 5). If I have felt this experience, if I have employed disidentification as survival strategy, then students in the classes I teach must certainly also practice this, perhaps not exactly as I did, but in their own way.

Muñoz's (1999) theoretical foundations for disidentification cover four broad themes: identity politics, queer/race theory, linguistics, and psychoanalysis. Muñoz argues for a new consideration of identity politics that does not rehash overused theories of social constructivist or essentialist understandings of self. Instead, disidentification

imagines a reconstructed narrative of identity formation that locates the enacting of self at precisely the point where the discourses of essentialism and constructivism short circuit. Such identities use *and* are the fruits of a practice of disidentificatory reception and performance. (Muñoz, 1999, p. 6)

These "identities in difference," a term Muñoz borrows from the works of Sandoval, Alarcón, Anzaldúa, Moraga, and other works of radical women of color, occur "at the point of collision" between essentialist and constructivist perspectives (Muñoz, 1999, p. 6). This "moment of negotiation" allows for representation, where "the queer and the colored come into perception and the social order receives a jolt that may reverberate loudly and widely, or in less dramatic, yet locally indispensable ways" (p. 6). How might this type of representation be included in introductory film textbooks? A representation, through language or example, that jolts the heteronormative, white, patriarchal order?

Muñoz elucidates the ways a continued use of singular theories perpetuates the marginalizing process of diverse representations.

Muñoz's (1999) discussion of race and queer theories is concerned with what is elided by these theories in order to critique their use as foundational, singular discourses. Muñoz argues, "*Disidentifications* is meant to offer a lens to elucidate minoritarian politics that is not monocausal or monothematic, one that is calibrated to discern a multiplicity of interlocking identity components and the ways in which they affect the social" (p. 8). Muñoz (1999) continues this thought by borrowing the term intersectionality from Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) to posit that monocausal narratives act as "ideological barriers to multiple identifications" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 8). In particular for Muñoz's focus on queers of color disidentification, he builds upon Crenshaw's (1989) discussion to point to the abundance of whiteness in the canon of gay and lesbian studies and how, when LGBTQIA+ issues/examples/readings are discussed in classrooms and other educational sites, the assumption of whiteness is always present unless spoken otherwise. Muñoz explains,

A soft multicultural inclusion of race and ethnicity does not, on its own, lead to a progressive identity discourse. ... When race is discussed by most white queer theorists, it is usually a contained reading of an artist of color that does not factor questions of race into the entirety of their project. (p. 10)

Here I am challenged to change my own examples used in class and to remember that my whiteness acts as a barrier for my full understanding of intersections of identity. As I analyzed the chosen textbooks, I challenged myself to not fall prey to the monocausal narratives and monothematic structures that may purport to act as multicultural

inclusiveness when in actuality acting as barriers through use of the assumption of whiteness in language and examples. These barriers that I had implicitly put in place for students in the past sent them down a path where they negotiated what I presented as a *correct* analysis and their own identities as marginalized subjects as they performed disidentification as a path to agency. I did not wish to continue this marginalizing pedagogy.

Disidentification, for Muñoz represents a path through which a subject is interpellated. Building on Michel Pêcheux's (1982) linguistic theory that posits three modes of subjectivity construction wherein a subject either identifies, counteridentifies or "works on and against dominant ideology" to enact change (Muñoz, 1999, p. 11), Muñoz argues that the third path is the act of disidentification. Performing disidentification "is a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local or everyday struggles of resistance" (Muñoz, 1999, pp. 11–12). Muñoz couples Pêcheux's tri path with Judith Butler's (1993) assertion that a subject's misrecognition becomes the site where difference can be a democratizing force for our understanding of our difference. By doing so, he argues that "disidentification does not dispel those ideological contradictory elements; rather, like a melancholic subject holding on to a lost object, a disidentifying subject works to hold on to this object and invest it with new life" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 12). Investing an object or encounter with new life is central to my understanding of the ways in which I, and some students, negotiate our identities in various, relational ways. How might these introductory textbooks, in their use of

language and examples, allow for the labor of responding/negotiating/relating to “work on and against” the dominant ideology?

The final major theoretical foundation that Muñoz (1999) relates to disidentification is Psychoanalysis, in which he brings ideas of desire and identification into his discussion of the negotiations that LGBTQIA+ subjects perform. In reading Diana Fuss (1992) against and with Teresa de Lauretis (1994), Muñoz argues that both scholars’ revisionary consideration of Freud’s stages of identification provide space for the work that disidentification does. While not completely rejecting de Lauretis’s subject as one whose desire is within a delineated space, Muñoz aligns more with Fuss’s argument that subjectivity formation incorporates a vampiric identification that allows for malleable boundaries of cross-identification between subjects. Muñoz (1999) states,

People of color, queers of color, white queers, and other minorities occasionally and understandably long for separatist enclaves outside of the dominant culture. Such enclaves, however, are often politically disadvantageous when one stops to consider the ways in which the social script depends on minority factionalism and isolationism to maintain the status of the dominant order. (pp. 13–14)

While we may wish for and feel more comfortable in spaces where we only see those like us, this only serves to reinforce dominant fictions (Silverman, 1992) and, thus, works against our desire for recognition. Muñoz (1999) continues by arguing that our private desires and our public identification performances are more blurred than perhaps we realize. Disidentification works to open up “ways in which desire and identification can be tempered and rewritten (not dismissed or banished) through ideology” (p. 15). In which ways do introductory textbooks, through choice of language, visuals, and

examples, provide malleable spaces where identification is not prescribed by the dominant fiction? In which ways are the spaces fixed and ordered so as to allow only one path of identification?

In employing disidentificatory practices, subjects perform, what Muñoz (1999) terms, worldmaking:

The concept of worldmaking delineates the ways in which performances—both theatrical and everyday rituals—have the ability to establish alternate views of the world. These alternative vistas are more than simply views or perspectives; they are oppositional ideologies that function as critiques of oppressive regimes of “truth” that subjugate minoritarian people. Oppositional counterpublics are enabled by visions, “worldviews,” that reshape as they deconstruct reality. Such counterpublics are the aftermath of minoritarian performance. Such performances *transport* the performer *and* the spectator to a vantage point where transformation politics are imaginable. Worldmaking performances produce these vantage points by slicing into the façade of the real that is the majoritarian public sphere. Disidentificatory performances opt to do more than simply tear down the majoritarian public sphere. They disassemble that sphere of publicity and use its parts to build an alternative reality. Disidentification uses the majoritarian culture as raw material to make a new world. (pp. 195–196)

This worldmaking, this re-writing of the dominant fiction, this resistance of majoritarian culture is empowering but also laborious for the LGBTQIA+ student within the classroom and the other areas of the public educational sphere. Muñoz points to disidentification as “cultural, material, and psychic survival” where the minoritarian subject “manag[es] and neogtiat[es] historical trauma and systematic violence” (p. 161). If the introductory textbooks utilized for film courses add to this labor, this trauma and violence through historical marginalization, it is imperative to carefully analyze them for the work they do upon identities and posit a *counterpublic* textbook that turns the labor of

disidentification into a *worldmaking* that considers all possibilities of perspective and representation.

Muñoz's worldmaking presents considerations of time, space, and futurity in the re-working of cultural texts by minority subjects. "Disidentificatory performance transports us across symbolic space, it also inserts us in a conterminous time where we witness a new formation within the present and future" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 198). Here, in futurity and the malleable boundaries of time and space, is where Puar (2007) and Weheliye (2014) pick up the narrative of the theoretical underpinnings of this project. Before delving into greater depths of these connections, it is necessary to provide a brief theoretical through line of the development of intersectionality as identity politics.

### **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality covers a wide range of research, theory, and praxis that considers the intersections of multiple identities that are marginalized by dominant narratives. Nash (2008) defines intersectionality as "the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality" (p. 2). Intersectionality argues that our identities should be understood as a counter to theorizing an essentialist woman or race or any other universalizing category.

Numerous scholars argue that identities constructed from subjectivities cannot be viewed only through a lens of dominant ideological experiences (see Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983; Anthias et al., 1992; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Fine, 1991). Crenshaw, credited with coining the term "intersectionality," looks at the ways in which gender and race intersect to marginalize Black women. Anthias and Yuval-Davis write about the

intersections of nationality, ethnicity, and gender, particularly as these identities relate to women in Israel, the United States, and England. Fine's scholarship centers upon the relationship between class, gender, race, and (dis)ability (Guidroz & Berger, 2009). Each of these theorists' work is in reaction to the continued marginalizing of certain identities, in particular women of color, within dominant white feminist scholarship. In considering the role of intersectionality, these scholars provide perspectives of subjectivity and identity construction that advance the work of the psychoanalytic and linguistic perspectives.

In response to almost two decades of scholarship since Crenshaw (1989) first used the term intersectionality, Nash (2008) provides a thematic overview of intersectional identity theorizing and paradoxes inherent in this work. Thematically, intersectionality scholarship has considered the complexity of multiple identities, provided a vocabulary to respond to identity politics, and presented work from multiply-marginalized perspectives. Paradoxes within these studies, Nash argues, include a lack of a clear methodological approach, identity categories that can become fixed and reified and thus trans-historical, and an additive model approach that often recognizes the experiences of some identities over others. Nash challenges intersectional theorists to move beyond an additive model that only constructs a subject through multiple identities and to, instead, consider how multiple identities interact in dichotomous ways.

Nash's (2008) scholarship provides for my work a bridge between Muñoz (1999), Puar (2007), and Weheliye (2014). At the end of Muñoz's book, he begins to consider identities as fluid in performances that transcend time and space to construct future



worlds of counternarratives that challenge and re-work majoritarian ideologies. Puar takes up embodied experiences in consideration of identities as assemblages—a melding of Nash’s (2008) interactions and Muñoz’s (1999) fluidity. Weheliye (2014) then brings to the discussion assemblages of identity that focus on the visual as always/already a factor of minoritarian experiences.

### **Identity as Assemblages**

Instead of addressing a unified, neoliberal student subject, this research project attempts to answer questions about addressing identities that are assemblages, “a series of dispersed but mutually implicated and messy networks” (Puar, 2007, p. 211). What I hope this project articulates are the ways in which we might re-think the organization, language, visuals, and examples employed in large, introductory, survey, film studies textbooks. Is education not one particular site, where the student is learning about themselves and their relationship to time and space, where “messy networks” happen?

Theorizing identity as an assemblage of contextual forces, Puar (2007) and Weheliye (2014) utilize Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) notion of multiplicities that “constitute continuously shifting relational totalities comprised of spasmodic networks between different entities (content) and their articulations within ‘acts and statements’ (expression)...the differing elements articulated in an assemblage become components only in their relational connectivity with other factors” (Weheliye, 2014, p. 46). While intersectionality is fixed as separate and distinct components that represent stasis and privileges the ability to name, assemblages are movements of identity. Assemblages are interwoven forces that merge and dissipate through time and space. Assemblages

foreground context in considering embodied affect. Assemblages are about a future-oriented body rather than one that is predetermined (Puar, 2007). In particular, for ethnic bodies as queered, the focus of Puar's work, "Assemblages are thus crucial conceptual tools that allow us to acknowledge and comprehend power beyond disciplinary regulatory models" (Puar, 2007, p. 215). For Puar, assemblages can be understood as a new form of methodology where we do not look for what we want to find; instead we look at what might be thought of as counter narrative to traditional ways of looking. Three thematic elements that diverge/converge in reading Muñoz and Puar stand out for my project: whiteness, three planes of identification, and representation.

Muñoz (1999) and Puar (2007) both critique variants of LGBTQIA+ studies as promoting the primacy of whiteness. Puar's critique focuses on neoliberal ideas of multiculturalism by building off of Rey Chow's (2002) "ascendancy of whiteness" in the genealogy of biopower (pp. 24–25). Multiculturalism includes certain ethnic bodies in the neoliberal design by giving primacy to some traits while ignoring other traits, making the ethnic body "complicit with this ascendancy" through "the careful management of difference: of difference within sameness, and of difference containing sameness" (Puar, 2007, p. 25). Projects of multiculturalism and inclusion are, therefore, dependent upon what is excluded—that which is deemed counter to U.S. exceptionalism. For the ethnic queer to be complicit in the "management of difference," they must reject some aspects of their identity that might align them instead with other communities that are excluded from the heteronormative state. The multicultural ideal of a "homonormative gay or queer consumer" is "projected to the state as a reproducer of heteronorms, where

associations with white national hetero- and homonormative bodies trump the desire for queer alliances across class, race, and citizenship” (Puar, 2007, p. 28). This ideal ethnic subject also functions as a tool in discourses of non-white communities as intolerant of homosexuality while positioning white communities as more accepting and open-minded. The primacy of whiteness in recent neoliberal agendas, Puar argues, results in a “pernicious binary...the homosexual other is white, the racial other is straight” (p. 32). How do the cultural artifacts used in introductory film textbooks reinforce this binary? In which ways are examples, visuals, and language used to foreground a discourse of the “ascendancy of whiteness?”

The binary that Puar (2007) posits is dependent on the separation of identities into intersectional categories. Whereas Muñoz (1999) theorizes a variant form of identity, one that even though there are considerations of contextual relations, can be known and named as disidentification, Puar (2007) disclaims identity as a named entity, instead analyzing queerness as the work of affect to “propose queerness as not an identity nor an anti-identity, but an assemblage that is spatially and temporally contingent” that “can approach queernesses that are unknown or not cogently knowable, that are in the midst of becoming” (p. 204). For Puar, there is “no queer subject or subject to queer” (p. 211), and as such, vectors of intersectionality, as theorized by queer scholars, begin to break down as one moves through various contextual relations that cannot be understood beforehand. Identities are performative, not steadfast, “You become an identity, yes, but also timelessness works to consolidate the fiction of a seamless stable identity” (p. 212). Puar argues that by trying to name identities, queer theorists are in fact assimilating with the

constructed “disciplinary apparatus of the state” that seeks to place identities into boxes where sexual, racial, class, all otherness, is reified (p. 212). Assemblages deconstruct these boxes to consider the ways in which our embodied selves, our movements through time and space, collide with affective contexts and/or other bodies. These relations reject a clearly defined truth of identity that can be understood prior to the encounter or movement. Assemblage—in constant movement—is, therefore, always about our future selves. How might we write a textbook that does not foreclose these relations? In which ways does the very nature of publishing a fixed, finished textbook go against assemblages of movement?

Like Muñoz (1999), Puar (2007) critiques strands of queer theory that adhere to ideals of queerness that reinforce the neoliberal formations of identity. Whereas Muñoz takes up the third strand of “working on and against” dominant forces to posit disidentification, Puar argues that the three possible paths, assimilation (Muñoz’s identification), resistance (Muñoz’s counteridentification), and transgression (Muñoz’s disidentification) all continue to work within the parameters of categories of heteronormativity that, especially in the context of the United States, reinforce dominant ideals of sexual exceptionalism. In reading Sarah Ahmed (2005) and Saba Mahmood (2004) with and against each other, Puar (2007) critiques these three paths: assimilation is “living out queerness in the most apolitical or conservatively political ways...wedded to individualism and the rational, liberal humanist subject” (p. 22); resistance “resonates with liberal humanism’s authorization of the fully self-possessed speaking subject, untethered by hegemony or false consciousness” (pp. 22–23); and transgression “relies on

a normative notion of deviance, always defined in relation to normativity, often universalizing” (p. 23). Puar argues that critiquing these theoretical notions of identity allows for a self-reflection that can help elucidate ways in which queer theory perpetuates acts of violence by reinforcing normative categories and ideologies. By changing the conversation from an epistemological questioning of the body to an ontological consideration of affective movement, assemblages “unsettles a long-standing preoccupation with queer diasporic representational practices” (p. 172). How affect allows for a change in representation through the dismantling of a primary subject is paramount to Puar’s discussion of assemblages.

As discussed earlier, exhaustive attempts to theorize the subject as apart from and/or intertwined with identity politics has brought us to what Puar (2007) states is an “affective turn in recent poststructuralist scholarship” (p. 206). This turn, however, even as it focuses on contextual forces through which we move, “may still limit us if they presume the automatic primacy and singularity of the disciplinary subject and its identitarian interpellation” (p. 206). Puar delineates two trajectories of scholarship on affect and identity, one situated in the emotive or expressive realm of feelings, the other based in Deleuzian thought of bodily matter where what is affective “escapes or remains outside of” discourse and thus is not readily noticed (p. 207). Both genealogies, however, Puar (2007) argues, are caught in a

somewhat circuitous debate about the relationship of affect to representation [that] still leaves both trajectories mired in the original problematic: if theorizations of affect to representation are currently employed to supplement or counter representational analyses, then whether affect is “mistakenly” ...hailed in the representational form of emotion or instead in the excess of emotion as it is

represented...it is nonetheless caught in the logic it seeks to challenge. The collective project, since all we can really enact is a representational schema of affect, is what we are now developing: *an epistemology of ontology and affect* [emphasis added]. (p. 207)

The considerations of the cultural and material body, how it affects and is affected by other bodies and discursive practices, become central to a representational project that instead of asking, “What does this body mean,” asks, “What and who does this body affect? What does this body do?” (p. 172). For the purposes of a reconsideration of representation of the LGBTQIA+ body within introductory film studies textbooks, how might language and artifacts used as examples be employed to add to the project of “an epistemology of ontology and affect,” where knowledge construction is not considered a permanent, fixed idea, but is constantly evolving? How can a reimaged living curriculum of film studies effectively propose the questions of bodily affect and production as represented in cultural film artifacts?

Weheliye (2014) furthers the Deleuze and Guattarian (1987) model of multiplicity to foreground what assemblages of subjectivity mean for Black feminist theories, in particular focusing on the flesh. Weheliye’s discussion of how assemblages interweave the seemingly counterintuitive ideas of social productivity and power is especially relevant to a new consideration of the student subject. Weheliye’s theoretical lens of Black studies is indebted to the work of Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter, which he adapts for his project as a reconsideration of Agamben’s bare life and Foucault’s biopolitics. While Weheliye (2014) works to “recalibrate” bare life and biopolitics through a consideration of the visual of the flesh, he posits that rethinking this

universalized subject can make us aware of and give us the ability to eradicate “global power structures...that are predicated upon hierarchies of racialized, gendered, sexualized, economized, and nationalized social existence” (p. 1). Hierarchies of gendered and sexualized subjects influence the content analysis I undertake through considering the assemblages of identity that Weheliye and Puar (2007) theorize. I have taken Weheliye’s (2014) assertion throughout the text that “the existence of alternative modes of life alongside the violence, subjugation, exploitation, and racialization that define the modern human” (pp. 1–2) can be realized in all forms of marginalized identities. These alternative modes of life provide a space of overlap with Muñoz’s (1999) disidentification and Puar’s (2007) epistemology of ontology and affect. By examining how articulations of power interact with multiplicities of identity, we can begin to rethink the ways in which we understand various student relations to cultural products—in the case of this study, textbooks.

Weheliye (2014) rejects the possibility of paths of identification because doing so only reinforces a liberatory subject that takes on forms of resistance or agency. For Weheliye, there is no path to assimilation, or working on or against oppression, there is, rather, the flesh, *habeas viscus*, the visual representation of violence and subjugation. In utilizing the phrase *habeas viscus*,<sup>5</sup> Weheliye (2014) considers new “genres of the human” where “the flesh, rather than displacing bare life or civil death...represents racializing assemblages of subjection that can never annihilate the lines of flight, freedom

---

<sup>5</sup> Weheliye (2014) uses this phrase from Spiller’s “distinction between body and flesh and the writ of *habeas corpus*...on the one hand to signal how violent political domination activates a fleshy surplus that simultaneously sustains and disfigures said brutality, and, on the other hand, to reclaim the atrocity of flesh as a pivotal arena for the politics emanating from different traditions of the oppressed” (p. 2).

dreams, practices of liberation, and possibilities of other worlds” (p. 2). While not deeming resistance and agency as unrelated to the project of alternative modes of life, Weheliye points to these formations as “assum[ing] full, self-present, and coherent subjects working against something or someone” (p. 2). Like Puar (2007), Weheliye’s text presents the body in a state of becoming, a future-oriented assemblage of ontology and affect through the visual. By imagining the futurity of the body, without giving priority to forms of resistance or agency, “We might come to a more layered and improvisatory understanding of extreme subjection if we do not decide in advance what forms its disfigurations should take on” (Weheliye, 2014, p. 2). By thinking beyond the “state of exception” in which deviant bodies are articulated through the politics of bare life, the future anterior of “you shall have the flesh” presents instead “assemblages of freedom that sway to the temporality of new syncopated beginnings for the human,” rendering “the hieroglyphics of the flesh into a potentiality in any and all things” (p. 137). The deviant body, one marked by the visual, represents the potentiality of new genres of the human through sonic vibrations, through assemblages of time and space, of ontology and affect, that manifest “beyond the world and continent of Man” (p. 137).

Racializing assemblages investigate the ways in which bare life and biopolitics serve to reinforce a discourse of the body that “transcends racialization via recourse to absolute biological matter” (Weheliye, 2014, p. 4). By relying on theories that consider all bodies as reduced to matter a priori to being racialized, sexualized, or gendered, we become compliant in “the production and maintenance of hierarchical distinctions between groups of humans” (p. 3). Weheliye argues that the visual of the flesh,



racializing assemblages, habeas viscus, “construes race not as a biological or cultural classification but as a set of sociopolitical processes that discipline humanity into full human, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans” (p. 4). These sociopolitical processes are “projected onto” the biological body where they become “the visual modalities in which dehumanization is practiced and lived” (pp. 5–6).

Weheliye opens up the consideration of the socio-political power of habeas viscus to additional considerations of the exceptional body, one not reduced to bodily matter. In brief discussions of the work of Dean Spade (2011) and Julia Oparah (2011), Weheliye, discusses how assemblages is being deployed in the realm of queer theories regarding the law and the prison industrial complex. Spade’s and Oparah’s consideration of exceptional black queer bodies moving through and around these cultural institutions

serve as one example of how putatively abject modes of being need not be redeployed within hegemonic frameworks but can be operationalized as variable liminal territories or articulated assemblages in movements to abolish the grounds upon which all forms of subjugation are administered. (Weheliye, 2014, p. 82)

Articulated assemblages, therefore, can be deployed as a way to consider all marginalized groups marked by visual representation.

When attempting to advance Weheliye’s (2014) foregrounding of the visual here, I come to a point where I continue to grapple with the connection I try to make. I am aware that the visual can mark some LGBTQIA+ individuals and not others. Most obviously, Weheliye’s racializing assemblage includes LGBTQIA+ individuals of color whose articulations move through and around the dominant socio-political structures of race and sexuality. How do articulated assemblages consider the white LGBTQIA+

individual? I begin to contemplate this through Weheliye's critique of Wynter's genealogy of modern hierarchy based on race rather than gender and his discussion of the un-gendering that Spiller's pornotroping reveals. I take up pornotroping later in the chapter, within the discussion of feminist/queer/film studies; here, I focus on Weheliye's counter argument to Wynter's universalized racialized subject.

Wynter (1990) posits, according to Weheliye (2014), that hierarchical structures in modernity, in particular during the American colonization, became predicated on aspects of the flesh rather than sexual differences. By reducing sexual difference as less than racial difference in the delineating of socio-political domination, Weheliye (2014) argues,

The shift that Wynter diagnoses, though surely present in the history of modernity, cannot be encompassed by the distinction between physiognomy and anatomy, even if not constructed as either categorical or complete, because neither anatomy nor sexual difference recede like silhouettes sketched in the soil at the shore that delimit the Drexciyan waters of the Middle Passage. (p. 40).

Wynter's primacy of race as what we might call the dominant intersection of identity, while not ignoring sexual difference outright, "largely leaves intact the morphological dimorphism upon which the modern west constructs gender stratification" (Weheliye, 2014, p. 41). Articulating assemblages that "form a continuum in a larger modern assemblage" ask, "How, even if it is not the primary model of hierarchical differentiation, sexual difference might figure into this theory of the human" (Weheliye, 2014, p. 41). For the LGBTQIA+ individual, who may be marked in some way through a visual stereotype that is not necessarily "yoked to the flesh," articulated assemblages, as opposed to strict,

delineated intersectional identities, “accent the productive ingredients of social formations while not silencing questions of power, reinstituting an innocent version of the subject, or neglecting the deterritorializing capabilities of power, ideology and so on” (Weheliye, 2014, p. 49). These marginalized groups as various additional genres of the human that move through and around institutions of power, represent the potentiality of the future, an imagining that Weheliye posits as “assemblages of freedom” (p. 137). Where does this leave the LGBTQIA+ individual who may not necessarily be marked by the visual?

A quick aside here so as to be completely forthcoming as a feminist scholar who acknowledges their standpoint. I would not be considered a marginalized person marked by the visual nor would my spouse. This is where I continue to grapple with the connection of Weheliye’s (2014) articulated assemblages to all individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ spectrum. I feel and experience aggressions, both micro and macro, that Muñoz (1999), Puar (2007), and Weheliye (2014) discuss, yet not in the same ways or as harshly as those persons who are marked by visual articulations. I am most often described as a “soccer mom” in American vernacular, though I have no children nor visit a lot of soccer fields. I am marked as such by my appearance, my flesh, the way I dress, the Subaru I drive. My spouse, a successful actress, is marked by what most American culture articulates as beauty and, thus, not considered by some as a true representation of the everyday lesbian (whatever that description might mean). A short narrative is required to paint a picture of what I am attempting to articulate. My spouse attended the college where I used to work. The diversity committee was preparing for a

student panel discussion of LGBTQIA+ experiences on our campus. After offering to ask my spouse if she would be willing to speak on the panel, I was told that she “was not really representative” of the LGBTQIA+ student. When I asked what that meant, my colleague, who identifies as lesbian, reluctantly told me, “She is just too pretty. She’s like an ‘L-Word lesbian.’” This encounter has stuck with me for several years now as I attempt to work through what it means to be visually “othered” even within what I had considered my community. While I am not at all comfortable equating this with racialized assemblages, as it is in no way the same experience, I do find this encounter to be one that represents “complex relations of articulations that constitute an open articulating principle—territorializing and deterritorializing, interested and asubjective—structured in political, economic, social, racial, and heteropatriarchal dominance” (Weheliye, 2014, p. 49). My colleague’s response represents one example of articulations of identity that serve to reinforce the socio-political structures of the Other within the guise of diversity.

Where my consideration of assemblages as connected to LGBTQIA+ students is developing as scholarship resides in ideas of relationality. In revisiting my discussion of the scholarship of Muñoz (1999), Puar (2007), and Weheliye (2014), I see many instances and incantations of the word relationality. As someone who has studied and taught various forms of communication, relationality has always centered my understanding of how culture and media work to shape each other. Relation is an underlying theme in the three authors’ works discussed in this section. Muñoz’s disidentification, Puar’s ontology and affect, and Weheliye’s articulated assemblages all

speak to “the constitutive potentiality of a totality that is structured in dominance and composed of the particular processes of *bringing-into-relation* [emphasis added], which offers spheres of interconnected existences that are in constant motion” (Weheliye, 2014, pp. 12–13). Interconnected existences in motion appear, to me, a more productive way of considering LGBTQIA+ student experiences with media texts than a strict adherence to intersectional identities.

Weheliye (2014) makes it very clear in *Habeas Viscus* that the project is not one that compares various groups of people. By portraying one group of persons as similar to or different from each other, we “merely reaffirm Man’s existent hierarchies rather than design *novel assemblages of relation* [emphasis added]” (p. 13). The relations of bodies to institutions, each other, the environment, ideology, etc. through assemblages of articulation simultaneously work to territorialize and deterritorialize, to confine and structure while also presenting permeable boundaries that allow for new considerations of the human. In positing that articulations of assemblage “ought not be cognized as unavoidably positive or liberating, particularly when set against putatively rigid structures such as race and colonialism. ...because assemblages do not assume change to adhere in full, self-present, and coherent subjects” (p. 47), Weheliye’s articulation of assemblages differs from Puar’s (2007) theory of assemblages that foreground ontology and affect. Weheliye (2014) explains the variation of their utilization of Deleuze and Guattarian (1987) ideas; he states that Puar’s “treatment of assemblages...construes these as wholly in flux and counter to the fixed racialized, sexualized, and nationalized identities found in theories of intersectionality, neglecting that assemblages are marked as

much by territorialization as they are by deterritorialization” (p. 155). While Puar argues that identities cannot be named or framed, Weheliye posits that certain identities are shaped and made permeable by subjugation. The relational aspect that Weheliye highlights harkens back to the relationship between Muñoz (1999) and the “fantastic bitchiness” of Truman Capote and my own relationship with a *Time* magazine cover screaming, “Yep, I’m gay.” These examples of disidentification traverse the territorializing and deterritorializing of articulated assemblages. In relation to the “putatively rigid structures” of sexual identity, I performed a self-preservation act that adhered to what was expected of me at the time—by my family, society, myself. Assemblages worked to territorialize me as a straight woman. In disidentifying, in working through feelings of repulsion yet attraction, I began a journey of sexualized assemblages that poked small holes in the dominant ideological structures of accepted sexual identity. This deterritorializing power of articulated assemblages manifests through “bringing-into-relation...rather than through the passages of comparison, deviance, exception, or particularity, since they fail to adequately describe how specific instances of the relations that compose political violence realize articulations of an ontological totality” (Weheliye, 2014, p. 13). Being in relation describes existence. When we disidentify or identify, we are in relation to someone or something. The ontological and affectual nature of existence manifests through being in relation. Articulations of assemblage—racial, sexual, national—are described by our relations. Analyses and evaluations of film texts historically have been reliant on comparing and contrasting technological and social formations. How might we write a curriculum that foregrounds

relationality rather than comparisons of similarity or difference? How do introductory film textbooks utilize language and examples of filmic artifacts to describe LGBTQIA+ voices and experiences? Do the authors rely on language of comparison or relationality?

If we consider the student as assemblage of multiplicity and relations rather than fixed identities or a singular disciplined being, then we do not assume who they are based on whom we want to find. We should not plan curriculum, write policy, or construct textbooks with the knowledge of what we think we already know about the student. Instead we should consider that which “cannot be known, seen, or heard, or has yet to be known, seen, or heard” and that which “allows for becoming beyond or without being” (Puar, 2007, p. 216).

### **A Venn Diagram of Feminist/Film/Queer Theory**

While feminist, film, and queer theory each presents a distinct genealogy, for the purposes of this project, I focus on the areas of intersection that most inform this analysis of introductory film textbooks and connect to considerations from the previous section: identity and relationality. In an attempt to wrangle the three theoretical perspectives into a somewhat manageable review and explanation of how I employ the ideas, I focus on an influential text from queer film theory, Alexander Doty’s (2000) *Flaming Classics: Queering the Film Canon* as it relates to Muñoz’s (1999), Puar’s (2007), and Weheliye’s (2014) works. I attempt to imagine a Venn diagram, through this discussion, that presents the overlapping space of feminism, film theory, and queer theory.

As a brief reminder of what was discussed earlier in the section on the history of film studies in the academy, feminist and queer theorists in film have often focused on

questions of spectatorship and representation in film. Early feminist film theorists argued that the filmic text always placed the female spectator in the position of the male gaze. Feminist theorists who brought in considerations of race to the discussion of spectatorship advanced ideas of the gaze to argue that for spectators of color, the gaze was oppositional, always filtered through the political atmosphere of the moment. Queer film theorists argued that heteronormative language, structure, and ideology served to further marginalize homosexual bodies through the ways in which they were represented in filmic texts. These representations were continually positioned as Other within both film and feminist theories. Even with the growth of LGBTQIA+ representation in independent films in the 1990s and the advancement of New Queer Cinema, queer theory stills resides within the boundaries of introductory film study. As Muñoz (1999), Puar (2007), and Weheliye (2014) also reveal, queer theory in general, as with early feminist theory, has failed to acknowledge the varying experiences of LGBTQIA+ persons of color. This is most definitely true as well in queer film theory. Doty's (2000) work, while useful as the space of overlap for my virtual Venn diagram, still very much focuses on a perceived white, universalized, queer experience.

Doty's (2000) consideration of queerness in mainstream Hollywood cinema looks at "how things are, or might be understood as, queer" (p. 2) rather than "making queer" popular culture texts by re-appropriating or re-reading them as queer. For Doty, reading a popular text as queer is not an alternative reading, but rather one that exists alongside mainstream, supposedly straight, readings. In arguing for this position, Doty questions if a "heterocentrist colonization" or "homophobic self-oppression" is at work in the minds



of LGBTQIA+ individuals who resist inherent queer readings in popular texts opting instead to insist on alternative readings (p. 2). For example, why do we assume a character is straight unless confronted with visual or aural confirmation that they are not? Through textual readings of six canonical films, Doty makes the case for queerness as always/already present in classic, supposedly mainstream films. While Doty terms this “queering the film canon,” we can read this work with and against Muñoz’s (1999) disidentification to consider how students might engage with popular text examples presented in introductory film studies textbooks.

In arguing that mainstream/canonical filmic texts are always/already queer, Doty (2000), while not necessarily articulating such, underscores the work of articulated assemblages and relationality in LGBTQIA+ readings. Doty (2000) and Muñoz (1999) are both working within the same academic timeframe, yet neither references the other in the texts I consider for this project. However, they both speak to three paths through which identification can happen, and they both lay a foundation for the thread that binds feminist, queer, and film theory while also pointing to what is left out of the conjoining of these theoretical frameworks. The authors are also reading different genres of visual art. Muñoz is interested in works that could be defined as outside the mainstream or canon of art, film, or performance. By examining identification across various performative venues, not just film, Muñoz articulates relational aspects of several types of visual and aural encounters. Doty is concerned only with films, specifically films considered part of the canon and centered mostly in the classical era, roughly 1920–1960. The other, more glaring difference, between Doty’s and Muñoz’s works is that Doty’s readings fall into

the discussion about queer theory that assumes whiteness while Muñoz's writings challenge this marginalized thinking.

Doty provides six descriptive considerations of the term queer/queerness as used in Queer film theory. Each of these descriptions assumes whiteness, even as Doty (2000) contends that "in practice, queerness has been more ideologically inclusive" (p. 6).

Inclusive here only incorporates fluid identities across a sexual or gender spectrum. To be fair, Doty's project is not about critical race theory as aligned with queer readings.

However, the examples used in the six descriptions of queer, and the six films addressed in the book's chapters, all focus on white queerness. Using the umbrella term "queer" in one form or another throughout his book reinforces the assumption of whiteness in his argument. Keeping this in mind, Doty still presents, for my project, considerations of how I might analyze introductory film texts and the language and examples used.

Doty (2000) argues that "a wider range of non-straight readings" is present in canonical films "because certain sexual things could not be stated baldly" (p. 2). Though he does not elaborate, what it appears he is referring to are the culturally accepted representations of sexuality in film at the time as proscribed by the Hays office and the Production Code. The wider range of readings that Doty articulates throughout his analyses of classical films present a third path that lies outside assimilating or radical resistance. In pushing back against the notion that accepting canonical texts as already queer rather than arguing that they serve only to reinforce a dominant ideology is akin to assimilating; Doty clarifies, "I don't see queer readings as any less there, or any less real, than straight readings of classic or otherwise 'mainstream' texts, I don't think that what I

do in this book is colluding with dominant representational or interpretive regimes that seek to make queerness ‘alternative’ or ‘sub straight’” (p. 2). Queer readings, in Doty’s articulation, appear at first, to align with Muñoz’s (1999) argument that minority subjects perform disidentifactory practices as alternatives to assimilation or radical counter narratives. Both authors speak to the negotiation of the assumption of straightness in texts. Both speak to the visual nature of the relationship between representation and identity. Much like Muñoz and I performed a disidentification in our spectatorships of Truman Capote and Ellen DeGeneres, Doty opens his book with a narrative about his disidentification while viewing Marilyn Monroe. Describing Monroe as “my first sex education teacher” (p. 1), Doty recounts a narrative of watching Monroe and Robert Mitchum in *The River of No Return* (Preminger, 1954) with his sister when they were young. Though the film reflected a heterosexual and violent relationship, Doty describes his memory of viewing the film, “It all looked very exciting and erotic to a nine-year-old sissy boy and his eight-year-old sister...Monroe’s creamy, breathy bloneness crushed up against Mitchum’s rough, unshaven darkness” (p. 1). Doty’s memory goes beyond just spectating, his disidentification is active when he and his sister “performed variations on the film’s crucial sex scene for months afterwards, alternating in the Monroe and Mitchum roles. So I guess Monroe also helped me learn about queerness, since I would act out fantasies of desiring her and of being her at the mercy of my butch-acting straight sister” (p. 1). Doty never necessarily articulates queer readings as agency, though his introductory story seems to point to those capabilities of his work, “My readings and

pleasures were no less valid or ‘there’ than those of people who took things straight” (p. 2).

If canonical texts are always/already queer, then representation for Doty lies as much in what does not appear or is said as it does in what we do see and hear, “In representation, as in life, you might never know for certain, as silences and gaps in information can be as telling and meaningful as what is said or shown” (p. 3).

Representation is then filtered through perspective. If silences and gaps are partners with visual and aural in the construction of knowledge for the viewer, then representation is a relational, contextual event. As consumers of canonical works, we have been positioned, to paraphrase Mulvey (1975) and hooks (1992), to view these filmic texts through heteronormative, patriarchal, colonizing eyes. Doty (2000) asks the following when framing his argument, “Why do most people still register ‘queer’ when only confronted with visual and aural codes drawn from a narrow (and often pejoratively charged) range?” (p. 3). The assumption of straightness in filmic texts mirrors assumptions from a heteronormative ideology that stereotypes queerness based on visual cues or aural confessions. However, as my own visual cues assert, representation is not always clearly noted.

Doty (2000) argues against minimalizing queer representation discussions when we only consider audience or critical reception. Doing so would go against the idea that texts are always/already queer. As queer film history has revealed, LGBTQIA+ filmmakers were very much present during the classical period—Dorothy Arzner, a prime example. These filmmakers, “creative queers, including queer-positioned, straight-

identifying people” (p. 4) as Doty (2000) describes them, perhaps consciously or sub-consciously might be a source of queerness that can be found in canonical texts.

Queerness does not have to be blatantly represented, instead “representation can be understood in ways as subtle and complex as those in which we understand real life” (p. 5). Queer readings, for Doty, also do not necessarily include a relationship to dominant readings. He argues, “It is also politically important, if queer readings are to stand up as legitimate readings in their own right, to articulate how other people might understand things *without reference to* these dominant cultural readings” (p. 6). As a basis for the disassociation of dominant readings from queer ones, Doty speaks to the complex fluidity of gender and sexuality even if some readers “stick to the straight and narrow much of the time” (p. 6). Here I find an uneasy association with Doty’s work. In terms of identity and relationality, I do not agree that queer readings, dominant readings, or any other type of readings could exist without consideration of each other. Even if, as Doty argues, queer readings are not colluding with or alternatives to straight readings, queer readings are still in relationship to those readings just as the readers are always/already in relation to dominant ideologies. It is not plausible that one could express queer readings “without reference to” any other possible readings. Our readings, like our identities, are not intersectional (e.g., lesbian, white, middle age, middle class, non-religious), they are assembled, based on the situational aspects of the readings. Situational readings require relational considerations of ontology and affect.

Muñoz (1999) provides further considerations of the overlap in feminist, queer, and film theory while bringing into the discussion critical race theory. Three film

theorists whose work theorized the position of the spectator through Freudian psychoanalysis provide a connection of “the ways in which subjectivity is formed in modern culture” for Muñoz’s (1999) disidentification (p. 26). Muñoz traces the genealogy of spectatorship from Christian Metz through Laura Mulvey to Miriam Hansen. Metz (1975) first posited two identificatory positions of the spectator, one that identifies with the camera projector as if looking into Lacan’s mirror, the second that identifies with the star or character on the screen. Mulvey (1975) challenged Metz’s universal subject spectator by considering how gender affects the viewing position by forcing the female spectator to identify with the female character on screen, thus from a masochistic, cross-identifying male perspective. In updating her work, Mulvey (1981) further expanded on her argument to posit that the female spectator “returns... to the transsexed site of her childhood identification” (as cited in Muñoz, 2013, p. 27). Muñoz (1999) argues that Mulvey’s language use is “encoded in the terminology of transvestism, a brand of degayed transvestism that is positioned to disallow the possibility of reading a homosexual spectator” (p. 27). Hansen (1991) challenges Mulvey’s masculine spectator to argue that the gaze of the spectator is where identification happens. This gaze, because it resides within the identificatory practices of the female spectator, is “always vacillating and potentially transformative in its possibilities” (Muñoz, 2013, p. 27). The gaze, for Hansen, is reciprocated from the star on the screen allowing for multiple erotic identifications, thus decentering identification from a universalized or gendered spectator. The agency of the gaze aligns with disidentification for Muñoz (1999). He states, “Disidentification, like Hansen’s description of identification, is a survival strategy that is

employed by the minority spectator (the female spectator of the early twentieth century in Hansen's study) to resist and confound socially prescriptive patterns of identification" (p. 28).

Each of the previous considerations of spectator identification, while relying on Freudian thinking, does not take into account how race and queerness affect spectatorship. To advance the idea of an assumed white, binary spectator, Muñoz (1999) brings into the discussion the work of critical race and queer theory scholars who specifically focus on literary and media readings. Muñoz illuminates the contributions of three film scholars who challenge theories that hypothesize universal identificatory practices. Manthia Diawara (1993) and Chris Straayer (1996) advance Mulvey's spectator through considerations of race and queerness. Similar to bell hooks's (1992) argument that black female spectators do not engage with classical Hollywood film in the ways Mulvey suggests all female viewers do, Diawara (1993) argues that the black male spectator of classical Hollywood films also experiences identification differently. Diawara's spectator does not align with Mulvey's because "the dominate cinema situates Black characters primarily for the pleasure of White spectators (male and female)" (as cited in Muñoz, 1999, p. 28). Diawara posits that Black characters are always positioned in a place of dominance by whites or assimilated into a white society. Straayer speaks to the performance of disidentification that lesbian spectators engage in when they formulate a "hypothetical lesbian heroine" through reading practices that go beyond the heteronormative surface of the film's text and visual representations (Muñoz, 1999, p. 28). Muñoz (1999) argues that "reading between the dominant text's lines," as Straayer

does, represents a survival strategy for queer reception (p. 28). The spectators that Diawara and Straayer highlight rely on their relationship to the films as cultural products. They bring with them histories, emotions, and eroticisms that inform their relation to the filmic text.

Michele Wallace (1993) adds to the discussion of identificatory practices by aligning more with Hansen's transformative gaze in arguing that for the Black female viewer, white ideals of beauty can be reappropriated to complicate identity. Wallace identifies with Rita Hayworth's beauty, which she equates to the beauty of a Black woman, allowing for identification that crosses racial and sexual boundaries. The Black female viewer is in constant negotiation with her identity as she engages with texts that are a "subjective experience...about expanding and problematizing identity and identification, not abandoning any socially prescribed identity component" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 29). Within Wallace's argument, we begin to see the movement from intersectional identity toward assemblages of identity that become contextual depending on the ontological and affectual experiences of the relationship between Black female spectator and text. Disidentification, as a survival tactic, is informed by these critical race and queer scholars who each illuminate the many facets of identity that complicate the universalized spectator position.

One last connection between the visual of filmic texts and identificatory practices, for the purposes of my argument, arises from Weheliye's (2014) application of Spiller's pornotroping in an analysis of literature surrounding Frederick Douglass's (1845) *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (here after referred to as *Narrative*).



Pornotroping, Weheliye (2014) argues, reduces the Black body to bare life as an object of both desire and derision. Pornotropes are articulated throughout literature, art, and film, in particular those texts that present the slave body as subject of the narrative. Weheliye's reading of *Narrative* seeks to revisit the scenes in which Douglass describes the violence enacted on his flesh by the overseer Covey as a contrast to the ways many scholars have centered pornotropic readings on the opening passages that vividly detail the beating of Aunt Hester. Focusing particularly on the final fight in which Douglass resists an attack from Covey, Weheliye analyzes the passage as pornotropic where conventional positions of dominance (masculine) and subjugation (feminine) are shifted. Weheliye argues that though Douglass shows dominance at the end of the scene, he is still rendered feminine when the enslaved-master relationship leaves him tied to the overseer through a "somasochistic moment of same-sex violence...thus continuing to yoke enfleshment to ungendered black female subjects" (p. 96). The violence enacted upon Aunt Hester and Douglass represents, for Weheliye, "A continuum of ungendering that is unleashed by racial slavery's violence/sexuality matrix (pornotroping), and which has come to define sexuality in modernity" (p. 96). Pornotropic renderings are not bound by the binary of sexual desire, man for woman, woman for man. These scenes instead resist the reduction of political and sexual violence to that of heteronormative readings. If the flesh is ungendered, not reduced to the binary, then multiple pornotropic readings along the continuum of gender are possible. Weheliye (2014) here points to Spillers's use of the phrase "pansexual potential" to describe pornotroping (p. 96). Queer readings arise out of pornotroping through the acts of violence and sexual desire that reduce the object of those

acts to an ungendered and bare life existence. It is important to note here that Weheliye (2014) is not using the term queer “exclusively” as a word that describes sexual desire or gender expression, instead he utilizes queer as “shorthand for the interruption of the violence that attends to the enforcement of gender and sexual norms, especially as it pertains to blackness” (p. 97). For Weheliye, modern ideas of sexuality are bound to Black flesh through a history of pornotropic scenes throughout literary and visual representations that present slave and colonial narratives. Though Weheliye does not focus on LGBTQIA+ representation as pornotropic, he does leave space for a consideration of visual representations that lend themselves to readings based on Spillers’s work.

After analyzing the passages in Douglass’s *Narrative*, Weheliye turns to readings of visual representations of pornotroping, particularly films and television series that tell the stories of the enslaved and colonization. In reading *Sankofa* (Gerima, 1993) and *Mandingo* (Fleischer, 1975) Weheliye (2014) posits, “Cinema enables the production of bare life as a politico-sexual form of life, wherein the remainder that is effected but cannot be contained by the legal order is disseminated in the visual realm” (p. 98). Weheliye’s readings of these two films are evidence of a spectator, especially those theorized by hooks (1992), Diawara (1993), and Wallace (1993), who is positioned in a space of disidentification where the survival strategy is enacted when the “horror of torture” in enslaved narratives “remains suspended between the cinematic apparatus and the tortured body, which in turn, when it encounters slavery, produces a sexual surplus” (p. 98). The relationship between violence and sexual desire represented through the

visual “hail the slave and the spectator in order to engrave upon him or her the hypervisual yet also illegible hieroglyphics of the flesh” (Weheliye, 2014, p. 110) thus acting as reminders of the subjugation of Black flesh in socio-political arenas. Weheliye’s discussion opens up a space in which to question visual representations and use of language in describing LGBTQIA+ bodies in filmic texts and introductory film textbooks as forms of pornotroping. How might Weheliye’s connection of Spillers’s ideas to film representations of slavery be expanded to include representations of domination of LGBTQIA+ bodies by heteronormative exceptionalism without universalizing the domination and thus reverting back to the assumed whiteness of the experience? As mentioned previously, Weheliye leaves open space for this type of work,

Although the deviance from violence toward sexuality passes into actuality more frequently in the context of slavery than other forms of sovereign coercion, the idea of pornotroping must also be understood as conceptually igniting the im/potential libidinal currents that slumber in all acts of political domination and as part and parcel of modern sexuality as such. (p. 108)

How might we read films such as *Moonlight* (Jenkins, 2016), *Boys Don’t Cry* (Peirce, 1999), *The Laramie Project* (Kaufman, 2002), and *Pariah* (Rees, 2011) as containing instances of pornotroping or challenging such representation? How, or are, these films represented as such in film textbooks, if they are represented at all?

While my readings of filmic texts are indebted to and reliant upon my studies in feminist, film, and queer theory, my consideration of representation of these artifacts in introductory film textbooks is also informed by my work as a critical pedagogue. What follows is a brief consideration of the authors whose work I utilize to illuminate the

educational connections to my project along with a discussion of foundational ideas in interpretive analysis and where I see the two as interrelated.

### **Critical Pedagogy and Interpretive Analyses**

Joe Kincheloe (2008) provides an overview of the major tenets of critical pedagogy that point to its concern with agency, equality, and praxis. Critical pedagogy is focused on education that promotes self-reflection and empowerment through critical enlightenment and emancipation. The work of critical pedagogues includes a critique of economic determinism and scientific rationality as it works to reveal all forms of inequity and how research can perpetuate that inequity through claims of objectivity. Critical pedagogy recognizes that ontological and epistemological factors in education include the ways in which emotion and imagination intersect with knowledge production. Critical pedagogy is a pedagogy of immanence, where research moves toward a praxis of hope. In its research and praxis, critical pedagogy argues for re-conceptualized theories of power in which hegemony, ideology, and linguistic/discursive formations are exposed for their perpetuation of dominant ideas yet also viewed as sites where subversion and resistance can happen in a productive use of power. Critical pedagogues recognize that education happens outside the classroom and are, therefore, interested in the role of cultural pedagogy in the shaping of knowledge. Finally, critical pedagogues engage in critical hermeneutics as interpretive inquiry into the relationships between culture, power, and domination to reveal the multitude of inequities perpetuated by schooling and cultural pedagogy (Kincheloe, 2008, pp. 50–59).

Critical pedagogy is also concerned with uncovering, challenging, and dismantling the hidden curriculum in educational settings. The hidden curriculum is a concept within educational studies that highlights the implicit biases inherent in schooling, both from curriculum and from required behavioral rules, that reflect cultural hegemony. Henry Giroux (1978) defines the hidden curriculum as “those unstated norms, values, and beliefs transmitted to students through the underlying structure of schooling, as opposed to the formally recognized and sanctioned dimensions of the schooling experience” (p. 148). Michael Apple (2004) highlights the ways in which the hidden curriculum functions as an ideological tool perpetuating inequality in education:

Through their curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative activities in day-to-day life in classrooms, schools play a significant role in preserving if not generating... inequalities. ...They may perform economic and cultural functions and embody ideological rules that both preserve and enhance an existing set of structural relations. These relations operate at a fundamental level to help some groups and serve as a barrier to others. (pp. 63–64)

These unspoken normative values reinforce cultural expectations that propose ways of being part of the school community and larger social groups.

As the hidden curriculum has been discussed and debated over the years, scholars have highlighted some of the concerns with the hidden curriculum. Topics such as diversity, white privilege, bullying, and multi-ethnic education have become areas in which educational scholars advocate for reform to the traditional curriculum (Glossary of Education Reform, 2015, para. 12). One of the cultural values within the hidden curriculum that has been the focus of discussions over the last decade is the role of heteronormative ideologies. Carpenter and Lee (2010) found in their study of New

Zealand teacher education programs that “the influence of heteronormative attitudes, values and prejudices extends into education, and by default curriculum” (p. 99). A hidden curriculum of heteronormativity pervades all aspects of schooling as we have seen in debates about non-gendered bathroom access and so called “no promo homo” laws regarding state curriculums (GLSEN, 2019). As critical pedagogues, we are obligated to uncover, challenge, and dismantle the inequities of the hidden curriculum.

The foundational tenets of critical pedagogy point to a practice that is concerned with individual, human, and social change by pushing against the hidden curriculum. Through critical pedagogical praxis, social justice educators deliberately attempt to disturb dominant forces while examining one’s place within the dominant order. Perhaps the biggest influence on critical pedagogy and its constant work against oppressive forces is Paulo Freire’s (2001) insistence that we are all unfinished, that we all have more to learn over the course of our existence and that in this unfinished state, there is always hope. Freire states, “My security is grounded on the knowledge, which experience itself confirms, that I am unfinished” (p. 120). Existing in a constant state of searching, of being, of becoming, constitutes our complete openness as humans to learning about ourselves from self-reflection and community with others. When there is community, there is hope.

Hope and possibility are bound up in critical pedagogy and social justice education because there cannot be an alternative. One could argue that when presented with many injustices faced today by a majority of world citizens, it would be easy to relinquish hope and fall prey to a dominant ideology of forced acquiescence. However, to

do so would be to deny our fellow beings and ourselves our full potential as members of a human essence. Freire implores us to understand that “the absence of hope is not the ‘normal’ way to be human. It is a distortion” (p. 69). It is inherent in our make-up to have hope and to express this hope even during what might seem like our greatest depths of despair. Giroux (2011) argues for an educated hope, one that is “a form of oppositional utopianism...the attempt to make a difference by being able to imagine otherwise in order to act in other ways” (p. 121). To find these places of hope, both educator and individual must imagine a world that can change, where instances of inequality and oppression are subsumed in a sense of community and connectedness between all inhabitants of the earth. As a goal of critical pedagogy, this ability to imagine becomes a central tenet, as Shapiro (2006) asserts, “As educators we must certainly help students face the realities that surround us honestly and critically, but we must also encourage creative and imaginative images of a transformed world” (p. 176). We can learn from those whose work has informed us about the world and society in order to seek imaginative ways to resist and fight for change.

When we recognize that there is always hope then we also recognize that possibility exists to change the world. Critical pedagogy is an education of possibility bound up in hope. To face possibility does present for us challenges, both intellectually and embodied. In calling for an education of hope, Giroux (2011) implores for

a certain amount of courage on the part of intellectuals, requiring from them the willingness to articulate social possibilities, mediate the experience of injustice as part of a broader attempt to contest the workings of oppressive power, undermine various forms of domination, and fight for alternative ways to imagine the future. (p. 122)

For Giroux and the educator concerned with social justice, educated hope is utopian. It is the envisioning that a more just and engaged world is possible. This is a world that may condition us but does not determine us. We have the right to express our emotions about the state of the world, but as Freire (2001) explains, “We live in history at a time of possibility and not determinism” (p. 71). Education for social justice requires an acknowledgment of our frustrations and rebellious nature; however, we cannot let a dystopian view of the world take over, for then, the dominant ideology succeeds. Again, Freire (2001) points to possibility, “Transformation of the world implies a dialectic between the two actions: denouncing the process of dehumanization and announcing the dream of a new society” (p. 74). This dream of a new society is a constant struggle; the process of resisting dehumanizing forces is never finished. Still, there must be hope and possibility even when faced with the ongoing process of liberation and decolonization. hooks (2010) argues that when we forget about this ongoing struggle, when we forget that liberation is not a one-time event, then the fight for social justice is diminished. Our very humanity is wrapped up in possibility. We have an “extraordinary gift,” the ability “to make ourselves different tomorrow from what we are today” (Shapiro, 2006, p. 50). Education for social justice means that as educators we must work against these forces to ensure that our classrooms, schools, universities, and communities are places where each individual feels they are within a space that values their lived experience, their ideas, and their process of critical questioning as well as those of their fellow educational and life travelers.



Freire's (2001) concept of conscientization forms the base of a life concerned with critical pedagogy and social justice. Conscientization is a critical consciousness that "is a requirement of our human condition" (p. 55). Shapiro (2006) argues that conscientization is the core of teaching praxis, where the educator is encouraged "to live life with thoughtfulness and attentiveness, and the capacity to see 'reality' as humanly constructed, and always one of a number of possible ways of living." (pp. 190–191). As critical pedagogues, we are in constant motion as unfinished beings engaged in radical praxis.

As an evolution of critical theoretical approaches in critical pedagogy and building on the work of Wexler's scholarship on the defragmentation of the Cartesian subject, Kincheloe (2007) calls for a critical ontology that allows for an individual's understanding of "the nature and complexity of the ways dominant power works to construct subjectivity/consciousness via education, the media, and other cultural sites" (p. 33). As researchers, educators, and humans, when we employ critical ontology we become self-reflexive in our understanding of how social forces shape our identities. With this knowledge, we can become self-producing in our life structures and lived experiences. This reclaiming of our identities brings agency and possibility to our resistance of neoliberal ideologies.

As a critical pedagogue teaching media studies, whose work centers upon questions of power and privilege, my research often employs various types of interpretive analyses as methodological tools. I address my use of these tools more in the next

chapter. The three interpretive methodologies I utilized for this project encompass critical discourse analysis, content analysis, and comparative analysis.

In considering my use of critical discourse analysis, it is first necessary to explain the way I navigate the many approaches to discourse analysis, in particular the line between *CDA* and *cda*. The capitalized version is often associated with the work of Norman Fairclough, while the lower-case version refers to many iterations of analyses that do not solely follow Fairclough's language-centric theory. I find myself borrowing a bit from many different versions of critical discourse analysis, both in its upper- and lower-case forms, especially as these forms have been used in previous educational and media studies research.

Rebecca Rogers (2014) highlights three "areas of commensurability" (p. 1) between critical discourse analysis and educational research. First, because communication is inherent in the educational process, critical discourse analysis (hereafter referred to as *cda*, which is meant to encompass both the Fairclough and other iterations) can be used to show how learning is constructed in various contexts. Second, both *cda* and educational research are concerned with social and cultural interactions. Finally, *cda* and educational research consider the relationship between meaning-making and power through a range of interdisciplinary approaches, "responding to problems with different ways of looking, understanding, and as its practitioners hope, acting" (Rogers, 2014, p. 1). These three areas of overlap point to the work of a critical pedagogue, an educator concerned with questions of power and privilege and how we might mitigate marginalizing practices within our classrooms and institutions.

Rogers (2014) utilizes the work of three influential scholars to illuminate three broad areas of the intersection of critical discourse analysis and educational studies: James Gee, Norman Fairclough, and Gunther Kress. Rogers provides a helpful summary of the similarities and differences between the three scholars' articulations of the term "discourse." For Gee, *Discourse* is different from *discourse*. The latter "refers to the grammar of what is being said or written," while "Discourse with a capital D refers to the ways of representing, valuing, and participating with all of the sign systems that people have at their disposal" (Rogers, 2014, p. 7). Fairclough closely aligns with Gee's capital-D Discourse with the additional consideration of identity construction that allows for a move toward agency. Gee and Fairclough "both recognize how discourse functions to reproduce society (through its social structures, relationships, and value structures) but also has a hand in transforming society as people use discourses in creative and agentic ways" (Rogers, 2014, p. 7). Kress, also concerned with the ways in which people make meaning from social interactions, does so from a multi-modal perspective where "language is only one resource or mode from making-meaning. Others include images, gestures, body language, proxemics, color, movement, space, and time" (Rogers, 2014, p. 8). Gee and Fairclough, while approaching critical discourse analysis through differing methods, center their focus on language and text. Kress expands the use of cda through a methodological view that meaning is made through many different modes.

For the purposes of my project, I draw from all three approaches, using bits of each. From Gee (1989), I consider the use of language as forming identities, in particular hierarchical formations of the valuing of who gets to speak. Gee (1989) describes

Discourse as “a sort of ‘identity kit’ which comes complete with the appropriate costumes and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize” (p. 7). He continues by connecting capital-D Discourse to educational settings, “You cannot overtly teach anyone a Discourse in a classroom or anywhere else” (Gee, 1989, p. 7). The hidden curriculum confirms that you can indeed teach a Discourse covertly in a classroom. This project shows how in one particular area this covert teaching takes place.

From Fairclough’s (2014) scholarship in CDA, the transformation of analysis to praxis aligns with an important feature of critical pedagogy. Fairclough points to the connection between analysis and the application of what is discovered through the analytical process:

When we do CDA, the point is not just to analyze and criticize discourse...and perhaps suggest changes. It is to analyze and criticize, and ultimately to change the existing social reality in which discourse is related in particular ways to other social elements such as power relations, ideologies, economic and political strategies and policies. (p. 4)

It is not enough to just search for ways in which introductory film studies textbooks marginalize certain voices, we must use what we find to move toward a more inclusive curriculum.

And, finally, I take from Kress (2014), the understanding that meaning-making can be multi-modal, a particular focus for media studies. Kress employs the perspective of social semiotics in advocating for the use of his approach to critical discourse analysis in educational research:

A multimodal social semiotic approach provides a richer perspective on the many means involved in making meaning and learning; on forms and shapes of knowledge; on the many forms of evaluation and assessment; on the social relations evident in pedagogy; on the (self)-making of identity and, an in that, on the means that are central in the *recognition* of the agency and of the many kinds of semiotic work of learners in learning. (p. 208)

Multi-modal meaning-making applies not only to the textbooks under consideration in this project, but also for the types of assignments and assessments I advocate for in the final chapter.

Sean Phelan (2017) articulates three analytical approaches at the intersection of Critical Discourse Analysis and media studies (referring only to Fairclough's CDA here, though he does advocate for the use of multiple cda approaches in the introduction to his chapter). First, from a linguistic perspective, scholars analyze "the structural conventions of media texts and language" (Phelan, 2017, p. 288) paying particular attention to the function of ideology in word and typology choices. Next, the ways in which various identities and privilege are presented in media texts informs a use of CDA that considers the ways in which hierarchical constructions of knowledge and "social belonging" are performed (p. 288). The final approach examines "the sociological implications of media discourses" (p. 288), such as cultural and institutional values. As with Rogers's (2014) articulation of cda and educational research, Phelan's elucidation of the interdisciplinary work of CDA and media studies highlights cda/CDA's usefulness for this project as each of these three approaches are part of the analysis I undertake.

Many scholars advance the project of CDA/cda. I have chosen to highlight Gee (1989), Fairclough (2014), and Kress (2014) because their works are most often cited in

survey articles and edited books detailing the use of critical discourse analysis. Gee, Fairclough, and Kress are also the three scholars Rogers (2014) points to as connections between CDA/cda and educational research. While the scholarship of all three provide useful foundations for my study, the latter two, Fairclough and Kress, play a more important role in the methodological approach I utilized in this project, which I discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

As an analytical tool with a foundation in both Foucauldian and Habermasian theoretical considerations of the function of communication as social acts, critical discourse analysis (CDA/cda) opens up various avenues of inquiry for this project. Questions regarding identity construction, cartographies of knowledge, power and privilege can all be examined using CDA/cda as a guide in conjunction with my goal to approach the analysis from a feminist, critical pedagogue perspective.

As I utilize critical discourse analysis to interpret language and visual examples available for students in the various textbooks, I am also employing a content analysis methodology. Content analysis has a rich history, beginning with critical hermeneutic readings of religious texts, developing into communication theories related to audience meaning-making, and expanding into interdisciplinary approaches within the social sciences and humanities (Gheyle & Jacobs, 2017; Mayring, 2000). Content analysis (CA) as a method to define meaning within texts is utilized in various approaches and can be confused with discourse analysis (DA). Gheyle and Jacobs (2017) delineate the difference between CA and DA through their own interpretive take on Klaus Krippendorff's definition of CA as "a research technique for making replicable and valid

inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (as cited in Gheyle & Jacobs, 2017, para.1). Through its coding processes, Gheyle and Jacobs (2017) argue that CA is a “distinct methodology from discourse analysis” due to its inferential approach in contrast to an interpretive approach of discourse analysis (para. 4). The authors acknowledge a continuum of CA methodologies that move between positivistic, quantitative coding and the interpretative meaning-making more akin to discourse analysis. My use of content analysis methodology falls along this continuum more toward the interpretive DA end.

Once I completed the various steps of CDA/cda and content analysis, I turned to an overall comparative analysis to search for larger themes within introductory film studies curriculum. This comparative analysis was influenced by the work of the curriculum and textbook studies detailed next.

### **Curriculum and Textbook Studies**

A search of the relevant literature in curriculum and textbook studies revealed no significant work in analyses of diversity and knowledge construction in introductory film studies textbooks. Hundreds of scholarly articles and books can be found in searches for diversity and media but nothing substantial as it relates to the use of film studies textbooks in building curriculum. I turned my attention instead to studies that examine the organization of knowledge as it pertains to diverse populations as well as studies that focused particularly on LGBTQIA+ perspectives in introductory textbooks and/or curriculums from other disciplines.

## **Cartographies of Knowledge**

Mapping the ways in which knowledge is constructed through curriculum, Alexander and Mohanty (2010) examine syllabi from core introductory and upper-level courses in women, gender, and LGBTQ courses to present a genealogy of teaching transnational feminism within the academy. The authors map knowledge production through traditional educational institutions and then question how this knowledge is constructed and subverted in other cultural arenas. The authors focus on “what students are being asked to know within these disciplines at this historic moment” and “what knowledge is being generated” in terms of how curriculum is constructed and whose identities are foregrounded (p. 32). While not naming it as such, the authors utilize a critical interpretive approach to their research. They acknowledge their locations and perspectives as researchers and argue for knowledge production that is not bound to the site of the academy. In mapping knowledge production, Alexander and Mohanty argue that curriculum within the academy produces “cartographic rules” that “necessarily produce insiders and outsiders in the geographies of knowledge production” (p. 28). These rules automatically set up an “academy/community divide” that constructs a hierarchical relationship of power that centers the westernized, white, patriarchal, enlightened perspective and positions marginalized bodies as ‘other’ within academic institutions.

The authors question the ways in which syllabi “bend or reinforce normative cartographic rules” of knowledge production through an examination of the transnational in these particular courses (Alexander & Mohanty, 2010, p. 31). While the authors focus



on a specific element of these curricula and the colonization of its usage, the method of mapping knowledge is particularly pertinent to my project of inquiry. The authors posit three cartographic rules that guide my research regarding introductory film studies textbooks. First, their interpretive reading found that the transnational was always positioned as “elsewhere,” somewhere outside of the normative space of the local. A second rule was revealed in the construction of the curricula as U.S. or Eurocentric even while the courses attempted to utilize narratives of intersectional, colonized identities to explicate objectives of the course. This rule, while not as delineative as positioning the transnational as “elsewhere,” still constructed a hierarchy of location where the normative resides in westernized narratives. Third, the authors found that underneath discussions of multiple feminist identities resided cultural relativism. This rule was revealed in the ways in which syllabi constructed alterity through geographical distances, thus re-producing certain feminisms as other through a hierarchy of proximity to the United States. Notably missing from the majority of the syllabi was a consideration of the ethics of the academy in the ways in which the transnational was employed and a questioning of student and instructor role in the location specific construction of knowledge. Here Alexander and Mohanty (2010) present questions for further study that specifically speak to how these cartographic rules then affect other areas of the academy such as representation in student, faculty, and staff and other pedagogic practices. As an example of interpretive inquiry, the authors’ study of syllabi informs research into other types of knowledge production inherent in educational artifacts.

For the purposes of my study, I considered how the organization of each textbook set up cartographic rules and what these rules reveal about which viewing process is privileged. An examination of the organization of each text considered the proposed construction of knowledge for students as well as how the authors/publishers introduce this material to the instructor as a possible way to organize the course. The ordering of information presents a way in which certain elements/ideas are privileged over other theoretical or aesthetic constructs.

### **LGBTQIA+ Perspectives and Introductory Curriculums**

As a supplement to Alexander and Mohanty's (2010) scholarship, my research questions and method were also influenced by textbook studies from other disciplines. These textbook studies presented interpretive methods and methodological influences from which I cultivated research questions and an analytical plan. Three particular textbook/curriculum studies that focus on multicultural and LGBTQIA+ representation influenced the way I approached my interpretive analysis of the language and organization of introductory texts.

Macgillivray and Jennings (2008) examined foundational education textbooks to chart how these texts presented LGBTQIA+ individuals and issues through the contextual relationship of these representations with other themes and content in the books. The authors conducted a close reading of the content in an analysis of the ways in which LGBTQIA+ issues and histories are presented. In particular, the authors' conclusion that there is an exclusion of LGBTQIA+ contributions "in educational history, including the relationship of the LGBTQIA+ movement to the modern multicultural education

movement” (p. 183) informs one of my preliminary concerns about the representation of LGBTQIA+ media makers in film studies and especially film history. Their exploration of a case study and ways to include LGBTQIA+ contributions in textbooks also presents an example of how to organize the research process.

Gorski et al. (2013) examined 41 multicultural education syllabi and interviewed 80 instructors to question why LGBTQIA+ issues are largely left out of what would seem to be the very discipline in which these bodies would be addressed. These authors also concluded that LGBTQIA+ issues are often absent from multicultural education texts and when discussed are often framed in “heteronormative hegemony” (p. 238). Though I will not use an interview process as the authors did, their overall findings that show the erasure of LGBTQIA+ bodies and reinforcement of heterosexism in an educational program informs my research questions and method of analysis. The authors’ call for multi-cultural educators to incorporate a deeper, critical approach to LGBTQIA+ issues resonates with what I foresee as further considerations from this proposed study-a more inclusive introductory film studies curriculum.

Myerson et al. (2007) began their research as I have, as a practical need to choose a textbook for a survey course. For the authors, their task was to find a text for a class in human sexuality that presented “sexuality in an inclusive manner informed by feminist principles and queer theory with true interdisciplinarity in an enlightening and self-positive approach” (p. 94). As with my experience, they found this task frustrating. The authors examined the best-selling textbooks in their field, looking particularly for theoretical assumptions of sexuality as heteronormative and male centric. Their findings

include a basic organizational structure of the textbooks that are multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary, that privilege male, heteronormative whiteness as well as biological considerations over sociological ones. The authors conclude by offering a vision of what an interdisciplinary, “sex-positive,” feminist, queer textbook might look like and call for part of that work to “emphasize ‘sexual literacy,’ that is, the ability to read media and other cultural artifacts...giving students tools for empowerment in their own sexual decision making” (p. 108). This study in particular provides an example of interdisciplinary research methods of interpretive inquiry that culminates in a call for a change in pedagogical practices.

Each of the categories of literature discussed in this chapter form the basis for my study. These scholars provided foundations upon which I built my project, which at times was a bit like a Jenga puzzle. As I pulled a block of knowledge from one, I found another block teetering, waiting to be utilized, discarded, or countered. I actually (reluctantly) enjoyed the idea of a non-stabilized, every changing theoretical foundation. This confirmed Weheliye’s (2014) and Puar’s (2007) advice of approaching theoretical foundations and research as contextual assemblages, where we accept that we move into uncharted territories. While I have delineated the overlapping categories in this chapter, which continued to be malleable throughout this project, I am also aware that many other theoretical concepts moved around the outer edges of my thoughts, and at times, I am sure crept into the work I attempted here.

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY/METHOD

A concern with interdisciplinary perspectives means that the interpretive analysis work I embarked upon was grounded in several academic fields. As an educator and researcher, I align with methodological approaches excavated from feminist inquiry, critical pedagogy, and interpretive analysis. While my methodological plan for this project was to conduct an analysis of mass-market, introductory, film studies textbooks, throughout the process moments of precarity, shifts in tone, variations in rhythm occurred to “open up new modes of expression” (Manning, 2016, p. 2). I attempted to face those moments in ways that did not foreclose other possibilities of knowing. These moments arrived at times as painful memories of my own experiences as an undergraduate looking for someone like me within the realm of media and the examples that were shown in classes. Facing these past hauntings where “home becomes unfamiliar...where what’s been in your blind spot comes alive” (Gordon, 1997, p. xvi) prompted me to use these past experiences as reminders of aliveness, as motivation to transform a past pain into a more just future for LGBTQIA+ students. I challenged myself to face the possibilities these moments presented, the potential for “germs of freedom” in the event (Manning, 2016, p. 23) that shows the past experience as opening up “something-to-be-done” (Gordon, 1997, p. xvi) rather than a frightening barrier.

Approaching the research process from a place that is open to encounters and deviations from the set upon journey was predicated on my ability to practice mindful inquiry. Mindful inquiry places “the person at the center of the process of inquiry” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 4). As a researcher, I am always within the process, and the process is always within me. Mindful inquiry requires me to be aware of my place in the space I occupy at a given moment. As a reflexive practice, I need to be aware of how I engage with the world. For the focus of my research, this means in particular the media artifacts and educational spaces where my research takes place. As I analyze, reflect upon, and interact with these elements of the process, it is paramount that I do not look for the outcome I hope to find or ignore a path that arises because it does not fit the plan. Once the research process begins, mindfulness also asks that we allow ourselves to be vulnerable, open to the interactions and moments that arise as we engage with others (Behar, 1996). Mindful inquiry as a methodology envelops all that I do as a researcher. I cannot be separated from the research as it is always ongoing. Knowledge does not cease even when the project is complete.

As a researcher concerned with LGBTQIA+ experiences, feminist epistemology and methodologies provided a base from which to begin an investigation of research questions. Knowledge construction from a feminist perspective “investigates the influence of *socially constructed conceptions and norms of gender and gender-specific interests and experiences* on the production of knowledge” (Anderson, 1995, p. 54). Feminist epistemological inquiry calls for the foregrounding of those voices that have been marginalized or erased from histories. Therefore, methodologies that align with

feminist epistemology provide guidelines for research into the ways in which film studies students' knowledge of LGBTQIA+ lived experiences is constructed by mainstream, introductory, film survey textbooks.

In conducting research from a critical pedagogue and feminist perspective, I approached this project from the interdisciplinary methodology of bricolage. Bricolage is concerned with the ways in which research can be conducted as multi-method; for example, a research project that includes several methods—content analysis, historiography, ethnography, student surveys, etc. This project combines several methods in order to consider the ways in which introductory film studies in total is presented to the student. Utilizing several methods allowed me to triangulate my findings to help mitigate any validity concerns of the analysis. This analysis combined methods from three approaches: content analysis, comparative analysis, and critical discourse analysis. Before presenting how I employed each of these methods, it is necessary to explain the conceptual aspects of bricolage.

Stemming from a reconceptualization of critical theory that relies on the advancement of postdiscourses, bricolage refuses an actual standardized method of conducting research. At its foundation, bricolage is about ever-evolving analysis and theorizing. It calls for the researcher to consider their own place within the research as it is never a neutral undertaking. Bricolage, as an interdisciplinary method, allows for varying perspectives that reveal relationships between myriad forces that serve to subjugate and marginalize. Bricolage is concerned with contextual elements of the object

under examination to look for the ways that ideology can be disseminated through subversive tactics (Kincheloe, 2007; Kincheloe et al., 2012).

Employing a bricolage approach, the researcher does not begin with a specific outcome in mind but allows the research and imagination to guide the process while understanding the task can be a difficult one because of the very nature of the complexity of lived experiences and social contexts. Kincheloe et al. (2012) explain,

The task of the bricoleur is to attack this complexity, uncovering the invisible artifacts of power and culture documenting the nature of their influence not only on their own works, but on scholarship in general. In this process, bricoleurs act on the concept that theory is not an explanation of nature—it is more an explanation of or *relation to nature* [emphasis added]. (p. 21)

Bricolage is concerned with the relationship between the ontological and epistemological nature of both the researcher and the object of inquiry. Bricoleurs consider, therefore, their own subjectivity in terms of connection to the object of inquiry and the research process itself. The power of social forces and cultural productions to shape subjectivity is a basic assumption when undertaking bricolage research. For bricoleurs there is no claim to universal knowledge or subjectivity. In their research, they “raise questions about any knowledges and ways of knowing that claim universal status” (p. 27). A bricolage approach to research, where a student subject is part of the focus, would, therefore, be wary of claims of a liberal student subject—a unified subject as addressed by mass-market textbooks.

As stated earlier, mass-market introductory film studies textbooks must appeal to the widest possible audience. Therefore, the ideal of a unified student subject is



paramount in the consideration of the audience for which the authors are writing. As a business, textbook publishing is concerned with reaching every student. To acquire a contract for a survey textbook in any field requires the authors to adhere to this mindset. The textbooks chosen for this analysis are all from major publishing houses with histories of publishing for higher education with large mass-market appeal. In particular, this project examined five introductory, film studies textbooks often marketed for first- and second-year survey courses.

Interpretive analysis of the textbooks is combined with a collection of data on types and instances of language, visuals, and examples used in the presentation of the material. I used cultural products, such as LGBTQIA+ advocacy sites and media makers as well as social justice education advocacy groups, as a source through which new ways of looking and language use might be considered for a more inclusive introductory curriculum that allows for multiple paths to meaning-making.

### **Limitations of the Methodological Process**

While I contemplated utilizing a survey or interview method for analyzing the ways in which specific word choice in the textbooks related to meaning-making for LGBTQIA+ students, I put this idea aside because I believe it is too early in the process for surveys. I feel it is important first to conduct an overall analytical process that focuses on how knowledge is constructed in introductory film studies curriculum before we can move on to the ways in which this knowledge construction is put into specific practice by individual students. It is possible, through this interpretive approach, to assess the ways in

which knowledge construction positions certain students—for this study LGBTQIA+ students—outside of the majoritarian space of the classroom.

Fairclough (2014), in answering one criticism of Critical Discourse Analysis—that it excludes the voices of those that should be involved in the critique—argues that, while including interviews, reviews, or surveys in CDA is certainly possible, it is not necessary in the first or second stage of the method: *critique* and *explanation*. It is, however, a vital part of the third stage, *action*. This dialogue, however, can happen directly or indirectly, as in when someone reads the critical analysis and responds or takes up the challenge to change their praxis. Fairclough explains that the second section of the process, *explanation*,

does not rest upon dialogue with discourse participants, not because they do not themselves explain discourse (they may do) but because CDA is concerned with a quite specific type of explanation which may or may not figure in participant explanations along with others: explanation of relations between discourse with the sort of features that are critiqued in the first stage and other social elements. (p. 9)

My project here, as a first step, is concerned more with the ways in which a traditional film studies curriculum excludes certain voices and how these exclusions might position certain students. For now, I rely on my experience of years of teaching film studies, my own LGBTQIA+ identity (from an admittedly white, middle class experience), and my professional experience prior to stepping into education as a lens through which to analyze these textbooks. Moving forward this project should survey or interview students but only once there is a new practical curriculum available for comparison with the old. If students are going to be asked to speak to ways in which they

have continually been marginalized by certain language or example choices, then they need to have a comparative model that is more inclusive. Most students have spent years following along with the language and examples used by authors of textbooks rarely, if ever, questioning the legitimacy of the content. Asking them to critique something that is all they have ever known would be a difficult task and may not tell us much more than we already can glean from this project. I envision the steps in a larger project as a multi-method analytical process, building the beginnings of a new curriculum with inclusive language and filmic examples; student surveys and interviews with comparative examples; refining and enacting a new way of meaning-making in film studies. This part of the project, therefore, is only one of the beginning steps. In the final chapter, I do relate changes I have made in my curriculum to student responses on evaluation reports for my film and media studies courses. As always, a living curriculum is one that is constantly evolving and adapting.

### **Choosing the Texts for Analysis**

It is not easy to find publishing or usage numbers for textbooks. Publishers are not in business to tell us where their books rank nationally, if it is other than first. I have never had a book representative come to my office touting their textbook as the “fifth best-selling book.” There are several annual book publishing data reports for sale, but the information is costly and not necessarily inclusive of the information needed for this research.

In order to delineate which textbooks to examine, I combined elements from two textbook studies discussed in the literature review. Myerson et al. (2007) chose the

textbooks for their analysis on heteronormative language in sex education curriculum through the same format that any instructor might use: contacting textbook representatives to ascertain the available texts and then cross-referencing information from colleagues and other contacts to confirm they analyzed “all but one of the bestselling books on the market” (p. 97). Macgillivray and Jennings (2008), in their analysis of LGBTQ topics in education textbooks, add to this method of collection by including their own familiarity with the textbooks, author and title recognition, discussions with other professors, examination of other syllabi, anecdotal evidence of popularity, and cross-referencing of online bookseller’s catalogues that allowed them to analyze “eight foundations texts that to the best of our knowledge are the most widely used foundations texts currently” (p. 177).

The decision on which textbooks to examine for this project came from the following process: (a) my own familiarity with the textbooks from over 17 years of teaching introductory film studies at two universities and a community college, (b) discussions with other film studies professors and examination of their syllabi over the past 13 years, (c) comparing various online book sellers’ top-selling lists for introductory film studies textbooks, (d) contacting publisher representatives for the most up to date editions of 10 textbooks that I had currently on my office shelves. These texts covered all of the possibilities from the first three points. And finally, (e) I cross-referenced these 10 books with discussions on two blog sites of film studies professors (one from Temple University, another who taught at Plymouth State) that provided in-depth examinations of introductory film texts that they considered for courses before making a final decision for

their students. I then cut these 10 possibilities down to five books to analyze. This last elimination phase came from my concerns with moving away from a singular perspective. I wanted to examine textbooks that were not only written by one author. In the end I did choose to analyze a textbook written by a singular author due to its longevity and prominence in the field. I also chose two textbooks whose authors' scholarship focuses on gender and sexuality studies since the focus of my analysis is LGBTQIA+ voices. I wanted to compare texts that might, at least from their authors' biographies, suggest a more inclusive curriculum. This last condition meant including a textbook last updated in 2011, not ideal, but necessary since only one of the other textbooks included authors from this perspective. Each text is also contracted with a major textbook publishing company and, therefore, has a large marketing department promoting its usage.

Following, in alphabetical order by title, are the textbooks (n=5) I chose to analyze, along with a short description of the text layout and bios for the authors:<sup>6</sup>

1. *Film: A Critical Introduction*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (2011), Maria T. Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis
  - Pramaggiore is head of media studies at Maynooth University. Her scholarship focus is on gender and sexuality in media.
  - Wallis is a professor of film at North Carolina State University.

---

<sup>6</sup> I have not made any assumptions about the ethnicity of these authors based on photographs. To do so would mean marking the visual according to assumptions and stereotypes. With my questions regarding perspective and the scholars I use as foundational texts, the assumption of whiteness in language and identity is a consideration. The only statement I can make definitively is that none of the authors' bios mention a particular interest or study in critical race theory. However, the authors whose scholarship includes gender and sexuality in media may very well consider power dynamics of race in their work. A note also about my use of pronouns for these authors; I use the pronoun that is given in their respective bios because, again, to use a pronoun based on name or visual would be an assumption and not based in a consideration of identity as assemblage.

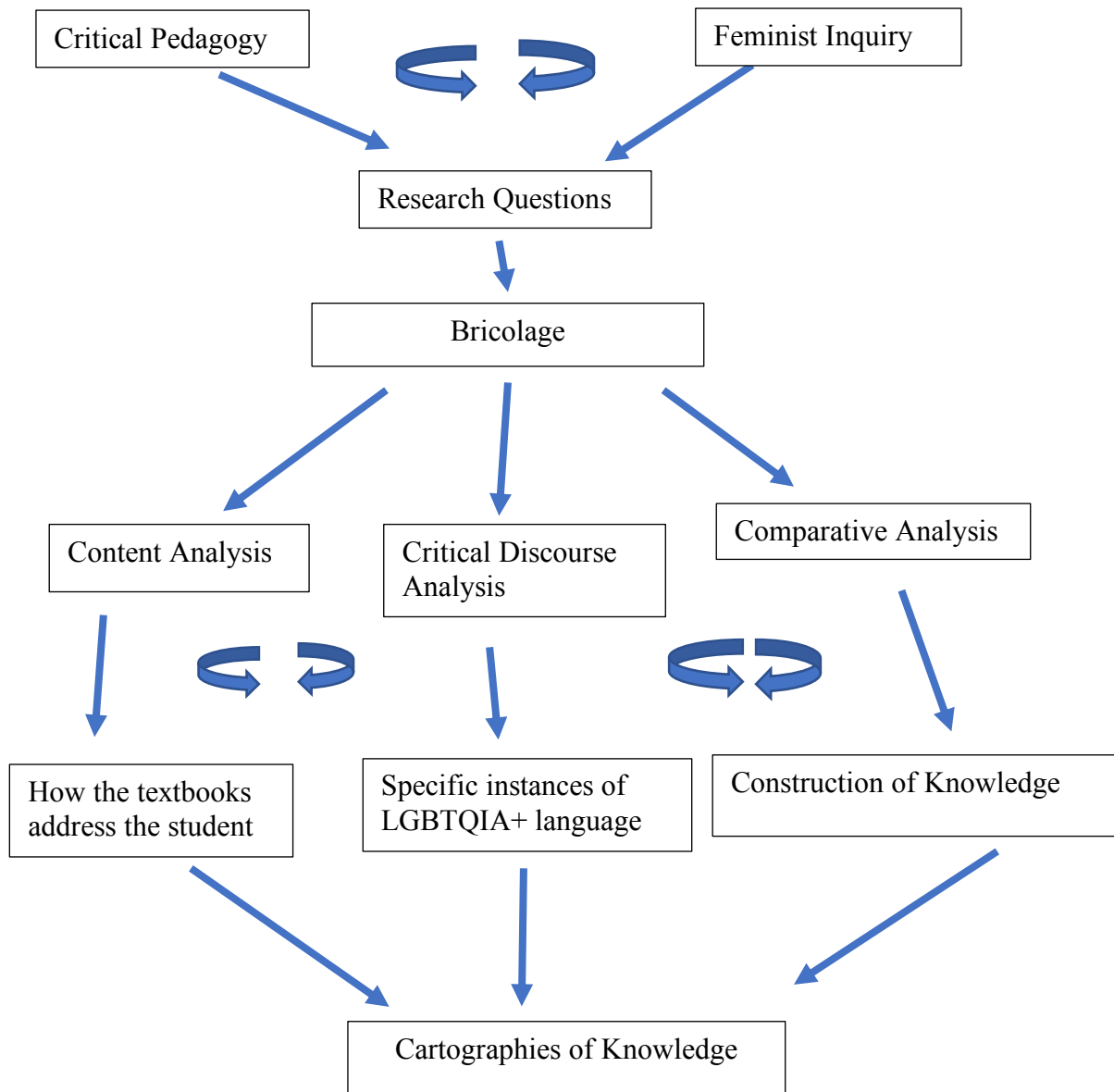
- Organized into three sections: I. Film analysis; II. Narrative and Aesthetic elements of film; III. Cinema and culture.
2. *Film Art: An Introduction*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (2017), David Bordwell, Kristen Thompson, and Jeff Smith
    - Bordwell is Professor Emeritus of Film Studies at the University of Wisconsin Madison. His work is widely read in all aspects of cinema. He is considered a neoformalist.
    - Thompson is an Honorary Fellow at the University of Wisconsin Madison. Her work centers on film history and aesthetics. She is also considered a neoformalist.
    - Smith is a professor of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin Madison.
    - This text is perhaps the most well-known and utilized film text. Organized into six sections: I. Film as an art form; II. Film form; III. Film style; IV. Film types; V. Critical analysis; VI. Film history.
  3. *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (2016), Richard Barsam and Dave Monahan
    - Barsam is Professor Emeritus of Film Studies at Hunter College. His scholarship focuses on American cinema, particularly non-fiction.
    - Monahan is associate professor and Chair of Film Studies at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. His scholarship focuses on the production of film, as he is a director, writer, and editor.
    - Organized in 11 chapters covering analysis, form, aesthetics, history, and production.
  4. *The Film Experience: An Introduction*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (2018), Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White
    - Corrigan is a professor of English, Art, History, and Cinema Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. His scholarship focuses on modern American and international cinema.
    - White is professor and Chair of Film and Media Studies at Swarthmore College. Her scholarship is concerned with gender and sexuality in cinema.
    - Organized into four sections: I. Cultural contexts; II. Formal compositions; III. Organizational structures; IV. Critical perspectives.
  5. *Understanding Movies*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed. (2018), Louis Giannetti
    - Giannetti is Professor Emeritus of English and Film at Case Western Reserve University. A former film critic, his writings cover film history, American cinema, and the French New Wave.

- Organized in 12 chapters covering film form, aesthetics, narrative, analysis, ideology, and criticism.

After completing the process of choosing which textbooks to examine for this project, I then began a critical discourse and content analysis of each textbook before conducting a comparative analysis of the group. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the method undertaken for this project from methodological foundations, through the data gathering process, to the outcomes representing overall themes.

**Figure 1**

**Method Process**



*Note.* This figure details the method process. Rotating arrows represent the interrelated/overlapping aspects of the process while straight arrows represent outcome of the steps of the process.



### **Thematic Content Analysis**

Following the guidelines set forth in Myerson et al. (2007) and Macgillivray and Jennings (2008), I conducted a content analysis of each textbook looking specifically for examples of language, visuals, and filmic analyses to provide support for answering my first research question that seeks to understand how traditional canonical film studies curriculum addresses the student. While I did gather information and code these under certain thematic elements following the method of Macgillivray and Jennings (2008), I did not go so far as to code very detailed instances of, for example, gendered language used, though I do feel the use of gendered generic pronouns is a problem that needs serious consideration. Instead, I gathered information in a more thematic fashion for this section of the analytical project following the path of Myerson et al. (2007), where their purpose was not “to provide overly structured, positivistic results” but instead “to point out themes in the common language and layout of introductory texts that are distinctively heteronormative” (p. 96). I did not want this project to devolve into a strictly data-dependent qualitative study. Frankly the sheer amount of textual material to cover (each textbook consisted of 250+ pages) was beyond my abilities and the purpose of the project. Instead, I examined the texts for themes surrounding LGBTQIA+ language, filmic examples, and visuals. In addition, I analyzed the organizational structure of the textbooks as a tool for construction of knowledge, which I delineate in the next section.

I began the content analysis of each textbook by examining the table of contents for language specific to, or perhaps adjacent to, topics within LGBTQIA+ concerns. In particular I looked for sections specifically titled with any terms connected directly to

LGBTQIA+ identities (n=6). I then examined each of these sections, coding for examples used, both descriptive and visual (n=62). At this level of content analysis, my only concern was the actual inclusion of a mention or visual. Coding specific to discursive context occurred in the next level of analysis utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis. I then returned to the table of contents looking for any additional sections that may have indirect connections to queer theory, feminist theory, or cultural studies, where I thought that perhaps LGBTQIA+ issues might be discussed. For example, chapters with titles related to social concepts or theoretical foundations that did not include a specific reference in the table of contents to LGBTQIA+ language (n=5). The next step in this process was to search each index for any LGBTQIA+ words or closely related concepts to clarify any missed areas that might be pertinent to the analytical project (n=6). Rather than conduct a line-by-line reading of each textbook, I chose to examine the areas in which the authors conduct significant critical analyses as examples for students to follow (n=26). Since these areas consist of large sections of the textbooks, often an entire chapter, their prominence and purpose present a sense of importance for the student reader. The films used as analysis were noted for their theme and filmmaker identity. Finally, I scanned each page of each textbook, looking for any visuals or other descriptive areas not detailed in the written portions that might be related to LGBTQIA+ identities. After identifying what I felt were all instances of LGBTQIA+ sections and themes, I then grouped the various coded elements into thematic categories, including the various identities that the acronym LGBTQIA+ represents.

Once the content analysis was complete I turned my focus to conducting a discourse analysis of the language employed by the authors. In particular, I revisited each of the sections and pages utilized for the content analysis, this time reading the sentences line by line, searching for both denotative and connotative ways in which the authors used LGBTQIA+ specific language.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

I employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) not only for its use in examining language, but also because CDA presents an approach that is interdisciplinary, multi-perspective, and is open to “continuous feedback between analysis and data collection” (Meyer, 2001, p. 18). Various iterations of CDA each employ their own methods and focus of linguistic or visual analysis (see Wodak & Myer, 2001). As a methodology, each variation informs the linguistic and visual analysis portion of my project; as a method, I lean more toward the perspective of Norman Fairclough (2001).

Fairclough eschews the term ‘method’ when referring to the process of performing CDA, instead considering his approach

as much a theory as a method...a theoretical perspective on language and more generally semiosis...as one ‘element’ or moment of the material social process (Williams, 1997), which give rise to ways of analyzing language or semiosis within broader analyses of the social process. (p. 121)

CDA, therefore, is in constant dialogue with other theories and methods that influence the given analysis. These influences, or “co-engagements” as Fairclough (2001, p. 121) describes the relationship between various social theories, are contextual, making a set method process too binding as a “tool” that one can take out and re-use from project to

project. Rather, Fairclough describes an “analytical framework for CDA” (p. 125) to use as a guide when selecting elements to examine. I paraphrase Fairclough’s (p. 125) framework here:

1. Focus on a social problem which has a semiotic aspect.
2. Identify obstacles to it being tackled (through analysis of particular contextual and semiotic relationships).
3. Consider whether the social order in a sense ‘needs’ the problem.
4. Identify possible ways past the obstacles.
5. Reflect critically on the analysis (1-4).

Following Fairclough’s framework, after conducting the overall content analysis, my findings revealed a “social problem with a semiotic framework” (p. 125) connected to the ways that the textbook authors utilized language in describing, not only LGBTQIA+ aspects of film studies, but also any analytical processes of meaning-making that were *other than* the traditional. Another marginalizing aspect the content analysis revealed was the use, or in most cases lack thereof, of LGBTQIA+ specific visual representations.

The content analysis also highlighted the obstacles present in examining the issue of LGBTQIA+ representation that I had to acknowledge. First, author perspective and scholarship obviously influenced the ways in which language was employed. This had to be taken into consideration. For example, as neoformalists, Bordwell et al. (2017) utilize jargon specific to form and content that inform the ways in which analysis is influenced by questions of identity. The second obstacle is the fact that these objects under analysis are static texts, written and published in a certain time frame. Therefore, any cultural

changes to the ways in which we use certain identity-constructing language since the time of publication would not be included in the textbooks, and I could not be certain the authors would make these changes even if given the opportunity to do so. As well, the use of filmic examples is tied to the time frame of publishing and would not include updated, relevant analyses of more inclusive filmic texts.

Fairclough (2001) describes the third aspect of the framework as the step where analysis serves to “establish through critique that the social order inherently generates a range of major problems which it ‘needs’ in order to sustain itself” (p. 126). If this problem of the social order’s own creation can be established, then the critique “contributes to the rationale for radical social change” (p. 126). In this step as well, Fairclough argues that ideology is also a consideration because “discourse is ideological insofar as it contributes to sustaining particular relations of power and domination” (p. 126). The original content analysis revealed problematic language use that contributed to the dominant social order through “othering” terminology and contextual descriptors. This discovery prompted me to engage with CDA as a methodological process.

As previously mentioned, I returned to each section from the content analysis in which I had found explicit connections to analytical processes that fell outside of the traditional analysis (e.g., feminist, critical race, queer theory) to examine each line by line for language use and page by page for visual representations. This process was a more detailed consideration of language and visuals than the content analysis because I was explicitly looking for ways in which these elements might be symbolically coded with dominant ideological perspectives of the social order. For the visual representations, I did

not conduct a visual analysis. At this stage, I was more concerned with how the visual was described and the number of films and filmmakers represented. I coded each usage (n=62) according to content areas, specifically accounting for language and visuals that pointed to an *othering* of these non-canonical theories. I then turned to the index of each textbook to search for LGBTQIA+ related terminology to cross-check that I had not missed any relevant sections. I added any new examples to the relevant coded section.

For the fourth step in Fairclough's (2001) framework, I separated the LGBTQIA+ themes from the line-by-line reading as a way to move toward answering the specific concern of this project: LGBTQIA+ representation. To assist in overcoming the obstacle of author perspectives, I turned to guidelines and suggestions from GLAAD (formerly "Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation"); Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN); the LGBTQIA+ Scholars of Color Network; the Center for LGBTQIA+ Studies (CLAGS); the Human Rights Campaign (HRC); Lambda Legal; Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPoC) organizations; and Safe Zone<sup>7</sup> training materials that cover the use of equitable and inclusive language. To analyze the filmic examples and visual representations used by the authors, I again turned to some of the aforementioned organizations as well as the QTPoC film resource list from the University of Arizona and GLAAD's yearly media awards nominees.<sup>8</sup> My own professional

---

<sup>7</sup> While there are debates to be had about the organizational structure and missions of some of these programs, especially in terms of assumptions of whiteness, I do find their considerations of the language used in educational settings instructive. I will continue to remind myself, however, about the concerns some academics and activists have about these organizations.

<sup>8</sup> As with the previous note, I will consider the uneasiness some scholars or activists might have with an organization such as GLAAD. I use their nominees as a guide of possible filmic texts, not as a complete or comprehensive list.

experience and research for classes I teach informs this section of the analytical process also. The advocacy resources represent what an interactive, consistently updated, online presence might add to the work to overcome the obstacle of a static textbook that is out of date by the time it is printed. In a fast-moving culture where public issues are debated over social media and the internet each day, updating a static text is most likely not the answer to overcoming this recurring obstacle.

The final step in Fairclough's (2001) framework is actually not a final step for my process, it is an ongoing, active presence in this project. As articulated earlier, feminist inquiry not only insists that I recognize my own standpoint, it also encourages constant reflection and reassessment. Self-reflection led to questions of validity of my analysis in prompting me to question the meaning I was making from the examples I extracted for analysis. I conducted a constant self-check to reinforce a process that is considered valid and reproducible.

After completing the content and CDA portions of the project, I conducted a comparative analysis of the themes generated from the coding process. It was necessary to conduct a comparative analysis to illuminate ways in which the textbooks converged with and diverged from each other in their curriculum development and analytical processes. In this final section of the methodological process, I sought to tease out a construction of knowledge set forth by a traditional film studies curriculum. The method for the comparative analysis is influenced by the textbook studies previously detailed and the scholarship of Alexander and Mohanty (2010).

### **Construction of Knowledge**

In their study of WGS and LGBTQIA+/queer studies courses discussed in the last chapter, Alexander and Mohanty (2010) trace the ways in which a core curriculum positions and constructs knowledge. The authors selected “thirteen core syllabi from WGS and LBTT/queer studies curricula” (p. 31), which they compared as a way to “understand the politics of knowledge and the spatialities of power” (p. 32) within the curriculum. This method informed my selection of textbooks to examine and the comparative analysis I undertook.

For the purposes of my study, I ask which cartographic rules are evident from a comparative analysis of these five introductory textbooks? An examination of the organization of each text considers the proposed construction of knowledge for students as well as how the authors/publishers introduce this material to the instructor as a possible way to organize the course. The ordering of information presents a way in which certain elements and ideas are privileged over other theoretical or aesthetic constructs. The language and visual analyses add to this comparative process by providing evidence of the ways in which these cartographic rules are employed through the authors’ use of descriptive passages, word choice, filmic example, and visual representation.

After analyzing all the information gathered from the five textbooks and synthesizing the coded data into themes (n=10) for each text, I continued the inductive process by comparing the themes from each text, looking for larger categories relevant to my research questions surrounding identity formation and meaning-making. I then examined these larger categories, reducing them into cartographies of knowledge present



within introductory film studies curriculum. The mapping of knowledge construction revealed cartographic rules (n=4) that each textbook exhibited in varying degrees of magnitude. I discuss these cartographic rules later in the project.

### **Validity**

By utilizing a methodology based in bricolage where I undertake three particular analytical methods, content analysis, CDA, and comparative analysis, I endeavored to reduce pre-determined outcomes based on my interactions with the texts both as a student and instructor. Though I can never stand outside of my own perspectives that are influenced by identity construction and histories both in the academy and in the professional world of filmmaking, with each step of the process, I reflected on the emotional toll the project inflicted. I had to remind myself to mitigate the effect of the findings from the content analysis on the CDA portion and then the CDA on the comparative process. I also relied on following the methods of the scholars discussed previously in order to replicate other studies. The examination of advocacy organizations' resources provided a space outside of the academy for practical applications of inclusive language and examples. By triangulating the results from my analysis with outcomes articulated by other textbooks and curriculum studies along with guidance from LGBTQIA+ advocacy organizations, my hope is that I have approached this project from a place in which its validity is strengthened. The following chapter highlights the findings from my analysis. After presenting the findings, Chapter V discusses the cartographic rules that I posit exist in introductory film studies before moving on to suggestions for the beginnings of a new curriculum.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYTICAL FINDINGS

Classical cinema is defined by its ‘invisibility,’ the use of traditional techniques and narrative structure that hide its construction from the viewer. We become immersed in the film, forgetting that we are actually watching a constant stream of still images. Classical aesthetics and storytelling perform an illusion whereby the viewer is transported by the images and sounds emanating from the screen into a world that magically appears before them. When that illusion is broken, sometimes purposefully, the audience is jolted back to reality and the awareness that they are watching a film. The invisibility of classical cinema is akin to education’s hidden curriculum: the organization of learning masks the power behind the construction and purpose of the learning process. Those who make the films and those who follow traditional education practices do not want the ‘behind the scenes’ machinations revealed. Classical film and the hidden curriculum both rely on passive, non-questioning receivers of information. Each needs us to accept what is on the surface without questioning the processes or outcomes.

An early theory of mass media, often referred to in rather violent terms as the ‘hypodermic needle’ or ‘magic bullet’ theory, posited that consumers of mass media were basically unwilling dupes taking in the information without cognitive realization or critical questioning of the narrative or means of production. This theory placed all the blame on the mass media, taking any responsibility or agency away from the viewer. We

were/are all masses, not individuals, according to these early researchers. Similarly, theories and practices in education perpetuated the idea that students were ‘empty vessels’ waiting for an enlightened teacher to pour knowledge into their brains without questioning the content or processes. These teaching methods did not account for the students as individuals with their own histories and identities, they too were a ‘mass audience.’ Even though each of these early theories have been criticized and challenged, both strands of theory are still evident in film studies today, if we look deep enough.

The organization of introductory film studies curriculum around classical theories and aesthetics continues the traditional—now largely disputed—early theories in both mass media and education that position the viewers/students as passive recipients. This traditional structuring also perpetuates the invisibility of marginalizing effects inherent in classical cinema practices and a hidden curriculum that maintains dominant ideological values. These two overlapping conventions of film studies and education, invisible/hidden and non-critical/passive, are evident in the analysis I conducted for this project. If the proposition is to build a more inclusive, identity-focused introductory film studies curriculum, then the invisible and hidden elements present in the current curriculum must be illuminated and interrogated.

### **Introductory Film Studies and the Construction of Knowledge**

The Eurocentric, heteronormative, patriarchal foundations of film studies still very much permeate the organization of introductory film studies textbooks even as the various authors attempt to include more recent theoretical advancements in their discussions. The textbooks I analyzed in this project—*Film: A Critical Introduction*, 3<sup>rd</sup>

ed. (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011); *Film Art: An Introduction*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Bordwell et al., 2017), *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Barsam & Monahan, 2016), *The Film Experience: An Introduction*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Corrigan & White, 2018), and *Understanding Movies*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed. (Giannetti, 2018)—all follow the same basic organizational structure, advancing from a foundation of analytical form and language to a holistic look at the industry as a social and economic institution. Information in between covers historical, aesthetic, narrative, culture, and genre theory as topics that constitute the appropriate analytical approach to film studies and appreciation of the form. While each of the textbooks has a slightly varied organization, they all follow this basic structure.

Each of the textbooks this study examined are admittedly written from and with a prominent Hollywood focus for American university classrooms. It is not required that an instructor follow the chapter organization of the textbook. Obviously, instructors can present the information in any order they wish and add to or delete information from their curriculum. I rarely follow the order of a textbook from beginning to end and always add additional material to a course syllabus from other sources. The actual physical organization of the chapters is not necessarily the focus of this study. While I use the term ‘organization’ to describe the analysis in this section, I am referring to the ways in which the format of the textbooks constructs knowledge more so than the actual physical organization of the chapters. I do utilize terminology linked to physical organization as an attempt to give the reader a mental picture of the layout of the texts.

I structure this chapter in four sections with various subsections that point to the ways in which traditional introductory film studies curriculum addresses student meaning-making, in particular LGBTQIA+ students for the purposes of this project. The first section encompasses the findings from the three interpretive methods used in hopes of excavating an organizational structure that illuminates the ways in which introductory film studies builds its curriculum and, thus, meaning-making processes. This section includes discussion of overarching discourses that point to dominant ideologies and hegemonic practices related to power and privilege. The second section details the ways in which aesthetic elements are employed in meaning-making through traditional analysis. In this discussion, narrative form and appropriate interpretations emerge as the standard by which the aesthetic should be compared. Section three examines how the organization of the curriculum constructs student knowledge in a multidisciplinary manner. By foregrounding a canonical approach to analysis, any additional meaning-making perspectives are relegated to other sections or chapters thus devaluing these perspectives when compared to the traditional process. The final section closely analyzes the use of language and examples particular to LGBTQIA+ identities within each textbook. These findings are compared to advocacy organizations' suggestions for accessible word choice and media resources to illuminate which identities are privileged as major examples.

### **Organization of Knowledge**

Four of the textbooks (Barsam & Monahan, 2016; Bordwell et al., 2017; Corrigan & White, 2018; Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) are organized in almost identical patterns.

*Understanding Movies* (Giannetti, 2018) represents somewhat of an outlier in its organization. For this reason, and others that will become apparent, I discuss it separately later in this chapter. Of the four textbooks that use similar patterns, *Film Art: An Introduction* (Bordwell et al, 2017; hereafter written as *Film Art*), in its 11<sup>th</sup> edition and first published in the late 1970s, appears to have perhaps influenced the construction of knowledge set forth in the organization of the other three textbooks I analyzed for this section. In an effort to be transparent and reemphasize my methodological foundations in feminist inquiry and critical pedagogy, I acknowledge here that *Film Art* was the first text I used as a graduate teaching assistant. It was the textbook chosen by the faculty for the introductory general education classes in film appreciation. The text was, therefore, a large influence on the ways in which I continued to present introductory film studies to the students in my classes over the next several years. I only moved away from the textbook due to the increasingly prohibitive cost. I found myself using a less expensive textbook, *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016, hereafter written as *Looking at Movies*) that, of all the four textbooks in this section, is the most aligned with *Film Art* in its construction. It appears that I continued to teach as I was taught, even when I thought I was changing up my curriculum. Due to its influence on my early teaching and its prominence within the discipline, I use *Film Art* as a basis of comparison for the following discussion of the similarities in the ways these four textbooks construct knowledge.

## **Film Form and Meaning**

The introduction and first chapters of *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017) orients the student within the analytical foundations of film studies through the introduction of terms, content, and filmic form. This first section presents a standardized, traditional way of analyzing film by providing the student with tools to understand cinematic language and production processes. The authors place heavy emphasis on narrative form, implicit and explicit meanings, and textual analysis. *Film Art* presents this information in two sections, the first entitled “Film Art and Filmmaking,” the second, “Film Form.” In the first section, students are introduced to the conflicts that can arise from the creative and business structures of the film industry; it poses the proverbial question of film as art or entertainment or business. The second section provides an antidote for the student viewer to these conflicts through an analysis of the patterns of film form in which the production aspects of the filmmaking process (both on screen and off) are rendered invisible so that the viewer is immersed in the film experience rather than cognizant of its construction.

The first section, “Film Art and Filmmaking” (Bordwell et al., 2017) centers its discussion of the film industry on the Hollywood version where studios and independent productions are analyzed through an economic and production process that requires financing from sources other than the government. This, therefore, positions an Americanized, free-market view as the normal economic structure of the industry, setting up many international film industries as alternative practices to the Hollywood model. In the second section, “Film Form,” the authors of *Film Art* use canonical films and auteur directors (all American) to analyze formal expectations in film. The Coen brothers and

Stanley Kubrick are the center of their discussion on analyzing patterns in films of certain directors, while *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939) serves as the film utilized throughout the chapter for more in depth analysis of film form. From the first chapters, the textbook is foregrounding white, male, Westernized views of film form and cinematic language as the norm by which any other type of film should be compared.

*Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016), *Film: A Critical Introduction* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011; hereafter referred to as *Film*), and *The Film Experience: An Introduction* (Corrigan & White, 2018; hereafter referred to as *The Film Experience*) all include chapters that discuss cinematic language, film form, and the processes of production within the American film system. *Looking at Movies* and *Film* include chapters on film form and content in the first sections of the textbooks, setting up a standard from which the student learns to analyze films.

As in *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017), the authors of *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) and *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) build upon literary theories to teach students how to discern patterns, motifs, structure, and repetition within a visual cinematic language. The ways in which meaning is created between viewer and filmmaker is a guiding thread for the authors. Bordwell et al. (2017) frame meaning through referential, implicit, explicit, and symptomatic meanings in film. Barsam and Monahan, almost parroting the authors of *Film Art*, discuss meaning-making as implicit and explicit, ignoring the referential and symptomatic aspects. Pramaggiore and Wallis present more tangible concepts of meaning. Their categories are presented as three statements, each related to a “different level of meaning,” which they name as



descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011, p. 26). Of the three claims, Pramaggiore and Wallis position the interpretive as the “most challenging and rewarding aspects of studying film” (p. 30). Bordwell et al. (2017), however, caution that implicit (interpretive) meaning “should not leave behind the *particular* and *concrete* features of a film” (p. 59). While the various authors’ personal perspectives of interpretive meaning may vary, what is evident in the way in which meaning-making is discussed as a particular of film analysis, is that meaning in film studies can be broken down into discernable categories through which students should attempt to fit their own experiences. These meaning-making categories are named by the authors and presented to the student readers as schema to be understood and digested as a starting point for the analytical process.

A variance from these three versions of meaning-making is present in *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018). As evident in the title, the authors frame their consideration of film analysis through a viewer’s experience with the form and content of the film itself, a view more in line with what I argue for later in this project. While *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017), *Looking At Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016), and *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) highlight interpretive meaning as one possibility for analysis, Corrigan and White (2018) foreground the “viewer’s experiences of the movies—their shared exposure to film culture and their individual interpretations guided by identification, cognition, and their experiential circumstances and histories” (p. 13). None of the other textbooks examined here discuss the relationship between viewer identity and histories and the analytical experience. The authors of the first three

textbooks tie the interpretative meaning back to a director's choices, "The filmmaker invites us to perform certain activities...building up implicit meaning guided by the film's overall forms" (Bordwell et al., 2017, p. 59). Or to filmmaking conventions, "Years of watching movies has taught us to expect a clearly motivated protagonist to pursue a goal, confronting obstacles and antagonists along the way toward a clear (and usually satisfying) resolution" (Barsam & Monahan, 2016, p. 13). Corrigan and White (2018) appear instead to allow for more student/viewer agency. However, later in the same section, Corrigan and White limit this agency when they state that their text "encourages readers to choose and explore different pathways into a film and film culture more generally" (p. 14) then proceed to provide boundaries for these pathways, "This is not to say that studying film allows a movie to mean anything that one wants: indeed this book insists on a precise understanding of film forms, practices, and terminologies" (p. 14). Can a student understand and define basic principles while also finding a 'different' meaning than one with which the authors may agree? Placing student meaning-making at the forefront but then setting rigid rules or limits that the student must follow negates identities that might not fall into traditional meaning-making processes. This limiting of varied experiences and relationships extends to the various authors' analyses of the filmmaking industry as well.

### **Hollywood as Leader and Underdog**

Each of the textbooks include chapters or sections detailing production processes, economics, and industry practices. *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) and *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) position the economic and creative process chapter

as the last entry of the text. As mentioned earlier, *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017) places this chapter first, as does *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018). Regardless of where the information appears, the content within the economic chapters are all organized in much the same manner: creative vs. economic interests; the stages of production; financing, distribution, and exhibition; studio vs. independent production. When global film industries from non-westernized countries are discussed by the various authors, it is in relation to the American version rather than an examination of the non-western processes.

In a short, two paragraph section entitled “Foreign Influences on Hollywood Films” in the chapter “How Movies are Made,” *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) frames the turn toward global co-productions and globalized narratives in Hollywood films as an appeal to foreign audiences, positioning the American industry as one in need of foreign collaborators and audiences rather than the cultural imperialist behemoth it has historically been and continues to be. *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) pushes this narrative of the underdog American industry further in its comparison of labor practices with other countries. In a section entitled “Industry Labor Practices” in the chapter “Cinema as Industry,” Pramaggiore and Wallis (2011) discuss financial changes in the industry that have led to outsourcing and runaway productions. While runaway productions as a category can include films shot in U.S. locales other than California and New York, Pramaggiore and Wallis (2011) define the term as “film shot outside of the U.S.” (p. 435) even as they include a discussion of runaway productions shot in various other U.S. states. In turn they also position the Hollywood industry as the

victim—“runaway productions cost an estimated 47,000 jobs in the U.S. between 2000 and 2006 and untold billions of dollars in economic benefits” (p. 436). The comparison lauds the traditional, historical Hollywood studio system where “an effective team of technicians would work together on project after project” (p. 434) while outsourcing is debased as motivated only by financial reasons where, “for example, Asian inkers and colorists do much of Disney’s animation work at a fraction of the wages American workers would demand” (p. 434). Here the authors reinforce a narrative of low-wage Asian workers taking away jobs from American industry professionals, again positioning the Hollywood industry talent as superior due to their higher monetary value. While a financial concern about outsourcing very well may be valid, what is also true is that a vibrant history of Asian animation has produced very talented animators. Not all animation originated from Disney, and the studio does not have a monopoly on talent. Varying salary scales and expectations does not necessarily mean higher quality talent. Comparisons to non-American industry practices within these introductory textbooks serve to build a foundation for the student that places the U.S. film industry, and in particular the traditional free-market economics of that industry, as the norm by which all others are positioned as lacking or as culprits in a plot to steal American jobs. These comparisons extend to the various authors’ approaches to film history and theoretical chapters as well.

### **Hollywood History and the Privileging of Tradition**

The ways in which these textbooks organize knowledge is predicated on academic history and a privileging of the Hollywood tradition. This formation is also clearly

evident within the sections on historical frameworks and theoretical concepts. In fairness to the authors, these textbooks are not meant for a class about film history, and therefore, their aim is not to cover history in depth. The purpose of these texts is to make broader connections for the students between film and historical context. In some cases, the authors have written other textbooks on film history (e.g., *Film History: An Introduction*, Thompson & Bordwell, 2018) and more definitive film history textbooks are available for in depth study (e.g., *A History of Narrative Film*, Cook, 2016). Even with a cursory look at history in these film appreciation textbooks, we can see a hierarchical construction that places the Hollywood system and tradition ahead of a viewer's relational meaning-making process.

Returning to *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017) as a base for comparison, the positioning of historical information at the end of the textbook is telling when the authors begin the chapter with the statement, "Throughout this book, we've urged you to think like a filmmaker" (p. 452) then proceed to introduce the historical information as a way to consider constraints on filmmakers' choices due to time and space. Adhering to a formalist tradition, the authors are admittedly more concerned with the filmmaker and text than the viewer's relationship to the text. The historical chapter reinforces this view by comparing film movements around the world to the Hollywood tradition focusing on form and content. Bordwell et al. (2017) organize their chapter on film history by traditions and movements, placing these themes within chronological order beginning with the invention of film in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Within the introduction to the historical section, the authors place the United States' narrative film industry as an exemplar, "One

of the best examples of a filmmaking tradition is American studio cinema, so at various points in the chapter we'll examine how that tradition emerged and changed. In many respects the Hollywood tradition influenced filmmaking around the world.” (p. 456). The authors use of the phrase ‘Hollywood tradition’ sets up a normality against which various film movements challenge traditional choices. The authors describe these movements as “short-lived trends” during which filmmakers “favor a common approach to form, style, and theme that sets them somewhat apart from the usual practices” (p. 456). Here we can see from the beginning of the history chapter that the organization of knowledge foregrounds long-lasting traditions over the more culturally contextualized movements, which are often social or political in content and form.

In the most conventional sense, *Film Art* takes the student through a journey of film history in chronological order that sets up early history as domination of American and European industry and innovation. After an introduction of the beginnings of cinema in both the United States and France, the authors position a discussion of Hollywood cinema and the studio system first historically. Based on their timeline, this seems logical even though other cinemas were developing throughout Europe at the time, just not as quickly or as organized as the American industry. Another factor is at work here, by placing the Hollywood system at the forefront, the ‘tradition’ is established by which other traditions and movements are compared. Below are a few examples of introductory quotes for each of the film movements and traditions that follow the United States initial historical section in *Film Art*. These quotes showcase the preeminence given the American film industry by Bordwell et al.:

**German Expressionism:** The worldwide success of American films in the late 1910s and through the 1920s confronted filmmakers abroad with a harsh choice. Should they try to imitate Hollywood?...Or should they try to offer a type of cinema markedly different from the Hollywood standard? (p. 463)

**French Impressionism and Surrealism:** During the silent era, a number of film movements in France posed major alternatives to the emerging Hollywood tradition. (p. 466)

**Soviet Montage:** Few artists were as determined to shake up filmmaking as the men and women who came of age during the Russian Revolution...(t)he film world was galvanized by young people who scorned the current customs. (p. 470)

(While the section on Soviet Montage does not explicitly refer to Hollywood, we can infer “shake up filmmaking” and “scorn current customs” to mean traditional, canonical aesthetics as evident in Hollywood films).

**Italian Neo-Realism:** Nearly all major Neorealists...came to the movement as experienced filmmakers. They had absorbed lessons from Hollywood and European film traditions. (p. 478)

**French New Wave:** The young men saw no contradiction in rejecting the French filmmaking establishment while loving blatantly commercial Hollywood. The young rebels of Cahiers claimed that in works of certain directors...artistry existed in American cinema. (p. 480)

While the authors do illuminate the importance and artistry of each movement, the language of comparison to classical Hollywood perpetuates the historical blind spot that devalues the originality and, in many cases, political/cultural motivation for each movement.

Interspersed within the chronology of European film histories are other eras of Hollywood cinema, tracing its development through the invention of sound recording, addition of color photography, the era of the Golden Age, and the move toward

independent filmmaking. As a textbook whose target audience is American students, in depth coverage of the United States film industry is logical. However, if we harken back to the labeling of this industry as a tradition while covering European industries as movements all within a chronological order that highlights Hollywood cinema, we see a building of information as comparing and contrasting based on the privileging of the industry discussed first in the order. This organizational pattern is set up in the introductory pages to the historical chapter:

Again and again, we'll see that filmmakers who found the classical Hollywood model too confining have sought other, equally effective ways to make movies. But even when filmmakers refuse tradition, that tradition has shaped their creative thinking. And often rebellion against one tradition will draw upon other traditions. We'll see, for instance, that young Soviet filmmakers, refusing the meticulously staged melodramas of the older generation, drew inspirations from the emerging tradition of Hollywood. (Bordwell et al., 2017, pp. 452–453)

Here the authors open up the possibility of challenging a conventional system, a path some students might want to explore, only to suppress that possibility by presenting these challenges as always and already bound to the traditional ways of filmmaking. While it may be true that art is in some way indebted to its predecessors, allowing for an analysis of a particular film movement or tradition on its own, without being compared constantly to a culturally imperialistic Hollywood industry opens up more analytical possibilities for the students and their relationships to the filmic text.

Bordwell et al. do not describe any of the European or Soviet film industries as 'traditions,' however they do allow for this distinction for a 20-year period of Hong Kong film. In returning to the authors' definitions of traditions and movements, it is not overly



clear why they chose Hong Kong cinema of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century as a tradition. Over two paragraphs at the beginning of the history chapter they define tradition as “the community that shapes a filmmaker’s choice...they pass ideas about movie making from peer to peer, from expert to novice...a tradition, in effect, favors certain creative choices over others” (pp. 455–456). A movement, as seen in the quote earlier in this section, is short-lived, though the authors do not give an exact length of time other than “movements don’t last more than a few years” (p. 456). Based on the time frames the authors give for each movement they highlight, short-lived appears to mean 12 years or less. Perhaps this is why the two decades of Hong Kong cinema justify the term ‘tradition.’ There are other contradictions within the authors’ definitions of tradition and movement, but what could be more influential here is an underlying bias from the authors. David Bordwell first published a book on Hong Kong Cinema, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment*, in 2000 with a recently self-published second edition in 2010. Whatever the reason for labeling Hong Kong cinema as a tradition rather than movement, what is apparent is a continued comparison with and subordination to Hollywood cinema even when praising the “innovations in cinematic style and storytelling” of Hong Kong filmmakers (Bordwell et al., 2017, p. 488). This claim of innovation by the authors is contradicted in the opening sentences in a section on Hong Kong cinema entitled “Story and Style,” which compares the Hong Kong tradition to the Hollywood tradition. “Hong Kong cinema of the 1980s and early 1990s simmered with almost reckless energy. The rushed production schedules didn’t allow much time to prepare scripts, so the plots...tended to be less tightly unified than those in U.S. films” (p.

489). Here, innovation within another film industry becomes reckless, rushed, and less unified when compared to the preeminent Hollywood customs. Each movement or tradition that Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith discuss in their history chapter becomes subservient to the United States film industry due to the organization of the chapter and the comparisons made throughout.

Of the other three textbooks, *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) most resembles *Film Art's* (Bordwell et al., 2017) organization in its discussion of film history. Barsam and Monahan (2016) place the history chapter directly after the aesthetic chapters, utilizing historical context as a way to reiterate filmmakers' choices due to technological and cultural changes. Like *Film Art*, Barsam and Monahan (2016) organize the history chapter chronologically, highlighting many of the same film movements and time periods. Barsam and Monahan add to the historical discussion by including additional examples of countries involved in the earliest days of cinema, those outside of the traditional United States vs. France discussions. The authors also speak to the influences of international film industries on the content and form of Hollywood films. Additionally, they delve more deeply into the cultural and political conflicts occurring in each country as they set up the historical considerations of each movement. This inclusion of content that provides additional context and information for students could open up expanded opportunities for meaning-making outside of the traditional model; however, Barsam and Monahan minimize this opportunity by privileging the Hollywood system in both organization and content.

Utilizing chronological order allows the authors of *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) to place classical Hollywood first in the historical timeline, thus positioning it as the original comparison industry. “The ‘silent era’ of film history is distinguished by...the crystallization of the classical Hollywood style, the ascendance of Hollywood as the center of the world’s motion picture industry” (p. 414). This original position is further emphasized in a later section on Hollywood’s golden age, which the authors describe as “the most powerful and prolific period of film history yet” (p. 424). Employing descriptive terms like ascendance, center, powerful, and prolific while discussing the U.S. film industry serves as a discursive tool that implicitly reminds a student that classical Hollywood content and form is the standard bearer for comparison.

A major difference between *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017) and *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) can be seen in the theoretical approaches both present as ways to study film history. Aligning with their formalist theoretical stance, Bordwell et al. (2017) give students only one lens through which to view film history: content and form. Barsam and Monahan (2016), while formalist in much of their approach to the organization of the text, present students with four theoretical considerations for thinking about the history of film: aesthetic, technological, economic, and social. Of these four choices, only one includes the audience as part of the process of analyzing historical contexts. Within the discussion of the social historical approach, Barsam and Monahan briefly present questions about the film audience that guide this type of research, yet they describe the overall approach as the study of “the complex interaction between the movies—as a social institution—and other social institutions,

including government, religion, and labor” (p. 408). When the authors state that scholars conducting this research “ask to what extent, if any, a particular movie was produced to sway public opinion or effect social change” (p. 408), they make the viewer’s role in the historical research in this section passive. Giving the power to the filmic text and filmmaker here elides the viewer’s power in the process and denies some social history approaches that do in fact center more upon the relationship between viewer and filmic text (e.g., feminist, critical race, and queer film theories). Expanding the choices for students in how to approach the study of film history is commendable but denying more complex relational considerations undercuts the advancement *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) takes in this section.

The history chapter of *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018) utilizes a timeline-ordering tool from historiography. This tool, periodization, the authors describe as “a method of organizing film history by periods that are defined by historical events or that produced movies that share thematic and stylistic concerns” (pp. 56–57).

Approaching the history of film in this manner would seem to equalize the coverage of various national industries. As the authors state, “Although Hollywood has achieved a dominant economic and stylistic position in world film history, any view of film history would be incomplete if it ignored the rich traditions of filmmaking beyond Hollywood” (p. 57). Though the authors do integrate American film history with international industries within their chosen periodization frames, the title of the chapter itself, “History and Historiography: Hollywood and Beyond,” sets the tone of Hollywood as the foundation for comparison. While ‘beyond’ could be understood in this title as

chronology or advancement, it can also be understood as apart or away from, something other than the Hollywood industry.

This mode of comparison for analysis is evident in several sections where Corrigan and White (2018) discuss national cinemas in relation to the Hollywood system. In their introduction to German Expressionism, they state, “After a national cinema was centralized toward the end of World War I, German films began to compete successfully with Hollywood Cinema” (p. 61). In the introductory paragraph on Soviet silent films the authors highlight economic differences of Russia and the United States. “The Soviet cinema of this period developed out of the Russian Revolution of 1917, suggesting its distance from assumptions and aims of the capitalist economics of Hollywood” (p. 62). Even when Corrigan and White do not explicitly name Hollywood as the comparative standard, the organization of their chosen time frames reiterates the subordinate position of other industries, a position they warn against in the quote mentioned earlier that advised students to look beyond Hollywood. Each of the four periods the authors analyze in the history chapter begins with a discussion of the American film industry before moving on to other national cinemas. This organizational pattern automatically serves as a privileging of Hollywood practices. If the authors are concerned more with historical and cultural events that affect themes and styles of film industries, rather than adhering to a strict chronology of historical development, then it should not matter which national cinema is analyzed first. An example of this non-direct comparison occurs in their discussion of French impressionist cinema. Earlier in the chapter, in the first periodization section “Silent Cinema,” the authors describe the advancements in

Hollywood silent film. “The most pronounced and important aesthetic changes during this period included the development of narrative realism and the integration of the viewer’s perspective into the editing and narrative action” (p. 60). Placing this development first amongst national cinemas presents realism and the invisibility of cinema techniques as the traditional conventions of filmic language. Later in the same section on silent cinema, the authors describe French impressionist filmmakers work as “radical experiments with film form...aimed to destabilize familiar or objective ways of seeing and to revitalize the dynamics of human perception” (p. 63). Here usage of the phrases “radical experiments” and “destabilize familiar” remind the student reader that any film techniques that challenge the realism and invisibility of traditional filmic language developed by Hollywood are to be treated as a revolutionary opposition to the American film industry. The student could read “radical” and “destabilize” as a positive advancement, particularly with the term “revitalize” used later in the sentence. However, with the placement of the Hollywood industry first in the discussion of the silent cinema era and each subsequent periodization section, a hierarchy is established as to which industry is most important as to be discussed in the prominent position. This foremost position is bolstered by the language choice of the authors.

While the word choice in the previous paragraph positions the American film industry as the original for comparison, language utilized later in the chapter serves to enlist empathy from the student reader for the challenges Hollywood faced from a growing international industry. In a section entitled “Postwar Cinemas (1945–1975),” Corrigan and White (2018) introduce the student reader to a historical period in which:

The Hollywood studio system faced legal, economic, and cultural challenges at home and artistic and political ones from the many new wave cinemas emerging around the world, which were catalyzed by new ideas and alliances in the postwar period. (p. 67)

This sentence, serving as introduction to a subsection on the Hollywood industry post-World War II, implies an underdog status for Hollywood where forces at home, along with other recovering and emerging industries abroad, were partnering up to challenge the prominence of an American icon. The implicit function of this introductory sentence is that Hollywood, the original industry that all others should be measured against, is also to be identified as the industry other foreign powers are fighting against. The values and free-market structure emanating from Hollywood are presented here as under attack from national and international forces, reinforcing an ideology that dangerously permeates other cultural discourses throughout American history and present-day society. Corrigan and White add to the discussion of film history by including and greatly expanding upon discussions of national and transnational cinemas, however, the organizational structure of the history chapter along with the underlying ideological meanings associated with certain word choices and groupings constructs an understanding of film history that privileges the United States and Hollywood in particular.

Similar to *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018), *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) devotes more space to national and transnational cinemas that are often overlooked in textbooks on film appreciation. Rather than organizing historical considerations into one chapter, Pramaggiore and Wallis (2011) intersperse historical developments within aesthetic chapters. As an example, technological and cultural

changes that led to the development of sound are covered in the sound chapter. Likewise, the French New Wave and Soviet Montage are discussed in the editing chapter. Where the dominance of the Hollywood story is most prominent in *Film* is in a chapter entitled “Social Context and Film Style: National, International, and Transnational Cinema,” a thinly veiled history chapter in which organization is built upon film movements, historical timeframes, and cultural constraints. In an attempt to perhaps lessen Hollywood’s prominence, the authors set up the Hollywood comparison story in the introductory paragraph of the chapter, stating, “Ever since the 1920s, many people have equated Hollywood with moviemaking...Hollywood is not the world’s only major film industry, and its preferences for larger-than-life, escapist fantasies represents only one approach to filmmaking” (p. 343). As with the textbooks I discussed earlier, Pramaggiore and Wallis position Hollywood as the archetype of filmmaking when they reinforce the comparison made in the previous sentence by first discussing social contexts of the Hollywood studio era prior to discussions of international film industries. Before moving on to discuss various international cinemas, the authors justify the comparison based on economic, historical, and technical forces at work in film history:

One implication of Hollywood’s long-term dominance of international cinema is that its aesthetic conventions became something like default scenarios: the paradigms that filmmakers around the world have chosen to imitate or to resist or both. Hollywood’s textual norms have informed expectations and viewing experiences of filmgoers around the world for decades. (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2010, p. 349)

The authors continue to introduce the remaining sub-sections as comparisons to Hollywood, describing them as “cinemas that have departed in some ways from the style



and the production mode of the classical Hollywood studio system” (p. 349). Each of the next two sections in the textbook—one on international art cinema, another on Italian Neo-Realism—are directly contrasted to the Hollywood system. International art cinemas commonly share a “single trait...their contrast from the Hollywood studio model” (p. 350), while Italian Neo-Realism’s “principles and visual style were even further removed from Hollywood than those of art cinema” (p. 355). Each of these movements, rather than presented as their own entities, are positioned as other than Hollywood.

In an attempt to destabilize and debate the grouping of films as national products, Pramaggiore and Wallis (2011) present many questions pertinent to a student’s (and many film scholars’) schematic tendencies to think of films as only national entities. In particular, discussions surrounding ‘third’ and ‘fourth’ cinemas present films as less tied to shared national identity, instead considering a more relational aspect between colonizer and colonized or First Nations peoples and modern nation states. The authors struggle with explaining the debate over the fluid boundaries—both tangible and intangible—of national identity and how these debates are seen in any discussion that attempts to place film history, movements, or aesthetics within national contexts. This difficult and, I would argue, refreshing attempt to open up student learning to less traditional typography is unfortunately undercut by placing Hollywood as the dream factory story first in the chapter and then reinforcing this prominence in a chart at the end of the chapter detailing “cinema style and contexts” (fig. 11.13) where “Classical Hollywood” is the first entry (p. 361). While the authors may have organized both the chapter and chart chronologically, when an American student is presented with a chart that reads

horizontally from left to right, each characteristic that comes after the first entry detailing Hollywood's characteristics is invariably compared to Hollywood as the original.

Pramaggiore and Wallis, even while questioning the use of nationality as a categorizing tool, privilege the national identity of American cinema and, therefore, its prominence, through an organizational pattern that constructs knowledge through hierarchical and national characteristics.

The organization of introductory film studies curriculum positions the U.S. film industry as both leader and underdog through its comparative techniques and discursive tools, reinforcing cultural hegemonic values at the intersection of American ingenuity, entrepreneurship, and capitalism. As a first step of constructing student knowledge, the organization of introductory film studies curriculum privileges form and content from a Hollywood perspective. Filmmakers and filmic texts, particularly those tied to the American film industry, hold the power in meaning-making according to this organizational schema. The next step in the analytical process, according to traditional film studies, focuses on aesthetic elements of production. In these critiques of aesthetic elements, comparisons that reinforce the privileging set up in the first stage are employed to examine specific filmic texts, filmmakers, and other aspects of filmmaking.

### **The Canonical Approach**

Appropriate meaning-making choices in film analysis and privileging of the American film industry and its processes within the organization of each textbook sets the foundation upon which the student then proceeds into the study of the aesthetic form and storytelling of filmmaking. These conventions are not unique to film, but rather

heavily influenced by traditional Eurocentric ideals linked to Greek Aesthetic theories of beauty and truth. Students are introduced in the sections on aesthetic and narrative appreciation to appealing concepts of visual, textual, and aural form: the rule of thirds, the hero's journey, rhythm and fidelity. These westernized ideals become ingrained in the viewing experience through the reproduction of "ideologies and power relations" present in the content and form of the visual and aural representation (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, p. 23). Analyzing the aesthetic aspects of traditional Hollywood visual and narrative form constitutes the largest sections of these textbooks and serves as the basis by which all other types of filmmaking are compared.

### **The Aesthetic Perspective**

After teaching students how to analyze film through form and content, *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017) proceeds by providing the reader with in depth discussions of narrative storytelling, mise-en-scene (i.e., the arrangement of elements in the frame), cinematography, editing, and sound. The authors present these textual and aesthetic elements as a standard from which analysis in support of meaning-making (referential, implicit, explicit, or symptomatic) should be considered by students as they begin to form their appreciation for film.

Each of the four textbooks analyzed here organizes aesthetic qualities of film in the same manner. Three of the four textbooks place the narrative chapter prior to the aesthetic chapters, while *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018) discusses narrative after examining aesthetic qualities. *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) deviates slightly by adding a chapter solely focused on acting, which is an element

covered in mise-en-scene in the other textbooks. Learning about these aesthetic aspects constitutes the traditional way that film appreciation and analytical film writing is taught across the academy. The authors connect the formal elements of each aesthetic category to the ways in which viewers make meaning in film, most often turning to conventional ideas about the particular formal element under discussion. An analysis of the ways in which the authors consider camera framing highlights this similarity in knowledge construction.

### **Framing as Meaning-Making**

Framing in film encompasses all characteristics of camera position: height, angle, level, movement, and distance (Bordwell et al., 2017). Each of the four textbooks I examined for this section provide the student with basic definitions and technical specifications of framing, from aspect ratios to off-screen space. All of the authors make connections to their earlier considerations of meaning-making within these sections on framing. As with each of the aesthetic and technical aspects of filmmaking in the main sections of the textbooks, the authors place the agency of meaning-making in the hands of the filmmakers with little room for a student's own relationship to the media text.

Bordwell et al. (2017) caution against reducing framing choices to "hard-and-fast meanings" (p. 190) that are consistent across all films; instead they instruct the student, "We must, as usual, look for the *functions* the technique performs in the particular context of the total film" (p. 190). Each example the authors of *Film Art* use throughout their discussion of framing highlights directors' choices within the totality of the film and, therefore, the meaning the student should derive from those choices. The irony of

course, is that the authors are presenting their interpretation of the meaning the director supposedly intended by connecting the framing choices to the entirety of the film or of the director's overall style.

Bordwell et al. are not singular in their connection of meaning-making to the choices of the filmmaker, the other three textbooks highlight this relationship in their sections on framing. *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) forms the student's understanding of the camera position as it relates to space by describing the meaning-making as dictated by the filmmaker, "Camera placement and movement determine the way viewers perceive characters, event and objects in the world on screen" (p. 138). Similarly, when describing the association between framing and proximity to the camera, *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) reminds students, "Everything we see on screen has been placed there to develop the narrative's outcome and meaning. Our interpretations of these on-screen special relationships happen as unconsciously and automatically as they do in everyday life" (p. 235). While the authors are reinforcing analytical processes that they discuss earlier in a section on mise-en-scene and the conventions of filmmaking that viewers learn over the course of a lifetime of watching films, the underlying assumption here harkens back to the hypodermic needle/magic bullet theories of mass media in which the audience member was considered an unwitting vessel of media consumption. The authors seem to be teaching the student that meaning-making is innate and does not require thinking or inquiry as to what their relationship is to the film itself.

*The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018), in its discussion of framing aesthetics, again presents for the reader a contradiction in the authors' attempt to place agency for meaning in the hands of the student. In a section entitled "Defining Our Relationship to the Cinematic Image," the authors detail the moving image as "designed both to present (to show the visual truth of the subject matter realistically and reliably) and to represent (to color the truth with shades of meaning)" (Corrigan & White, 2018, p. 159). When analyzing a scene from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (Columbus, 2002) as an example to clarify their concept of representation in visual images, the authors state, "A perceptive viewer *must consider the most appropriate meanings* [emphasis added] for the shot—whether it reflects the [Hogwart's] students' position or the film's position" (p. 160). Perception here is not one that belongs solely to the student learning about analyzing a filmic text, the authors proclaim that a careful student of film will find one of the suitable meanings available from within the filmmaker's choices. The question of course becomes, "Who decides what those suitable meanings are in a given film?"

The next paragraph in *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018) begins a new section entitled "Interpretive Contexts for the Cinematic Language" in which the authors continue their discussion of meaning-making and the moving image. In this section the authors attempt to bring the interpretive process back in line with the relational aspect of the viewer and film even after declaring in the previous section that there are appropriate meanings to be found. When discussing framing techniques, Corrigan and White (2018) define their concept of interpreting the image through either

identifying with the image as presence (identifying with the intended point-of-view, the ‘appropriate’ meaning) or interpreting the image as text (when identifying with the point of view is not available), for example, in more experimental or avant-garde films. In both of these concepts of the interpretive process, the authors give the image primacy in the process and, therefore, the choices of the filmmaker, even while stating, “Our encounters with the values embedded in the images we experience shape our expectations” (p. 160). The use of the word ‘values’ here suggests a personal connection or relationship for the student viewer to a particular film, however, the following word ‘embedded’ gives the power of the relationship to the image and, therefore, filmmaker’s values rather than the viewer’s interpretation of those values. The authors speak to an appropriate experience of film viewing and interpretation that privileges the image and its representational values, “Recognizing the dominance of images either of presence or of textuality within a film is one way to begin to appreciate and understand it” (p. 164). This is in contrast to the relationship between viewer and image that the constant use of the word ‘experience’ in both the discussions in this section on framing and in the title of the textbook suggest. Again, here too we can ask a variation on the earlier question of what is a suitable interpretation if we perhaps do not ‘appreciate or understand’ the embedded values?

This comparison of the ways in which the authors of all the textbooks present analyses of framing show a similar thread of primacy given to the filmmaker as the catalyst of the meaning-making process in film appreciation and critical analysis. Privileging the filmmaker in this way negates the relationship of the student/viewer to the text and the identity formation at work within the relationship.

Bordwell et al. (2017) reinforce this position of the passive student/viewer in a chapter entitled “Summary: Style and Film Form,” a chapter meant to summarize all aspects of film form, content, and aesthetics. In a section from that chapter, “Watching and Listening: Style and the Viewer,” the authors state,

In other words, a director directs not only the cast and crew. *A director also directs us, directs our attention, and thus shapes our reaction* [emphasis added]. The filmmaker’s technical decisions *affect what we perceive and how we respond* [emphasis added]. (p. 306)

The authors leave no room for a student who may not respond to a film in the ways in which traditional film studies might suggest. Meaning-making is contingent upon the director’s choices rather than the relationship between viewer and film.

### **Genre and Film Typology**

The next major sections of these textbooks cover film types. Borrowing from theater and literary theory, film studies divides traditional film types into genres or form. After explaining genre theory for the students, film types are then compared by using narrative as a foundation to differentiate documentary, experimental, and in some textbooks, animation films. *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017) devotes a chapter to genre history, theory, and meaning-making before moving to a chapter that uses genre as defined in narrative film as a starting point to discuss other film categories.

Genres are a convenient way of organizing film types for analysis. They can often fit easily into categories with expected conventions and iconographies, especially the traditional Hollywood narrative film. Even while acknowledging that genres morph and develop over time, often blending and sprouting sub-genres that can be attributed to



changes in society or audience taste, Bordwell et al. continue to place the primacy of the meaning-making in the hands of the filmmaker and filmic traditions: “By knowing the conventions, viewers have a clear pathway into the film. Our expectations are set, and the film can communicate information economically” (p. 330). The authors seem to be stating that only through understanding the traits that place genres in certain categories, categories set through hundreds of years of privileged perspective, can the student begin to find the meaning of the film.

The authors continue this thread later in a section of the genre chapter by considering social issues reflected in the content of films. When explaining reflectionist scholars’ theories on the relationship between audiences and the context of a film’s content within larger social movements, Bordwell et al. (2017) argue that these views can be “oversimplified” because “if we look closely at a genre film, we usually discover complexities that nuance a reflectionist account” (p. 336). The use of the plural ‘we’ in the above quote is telling in its function of aligning the students with the authors’ view and serves to invalidate a social reflectionist consideration of the relationship between viewer and film. While the plural ‘we’ is used throughout *Film Art*, in some areas, such as this one, the connotation of the word carries more weight than the denotation. In this same section the authors analyze the character Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) from the film *Aliens* (Cameron, 1986) as an example of what they term “a feminist reflectionist argument,” describing “Ripley [as] a product of attitudes derived from the women’s movement of the 1970s” (Bordwell et al., 2017). By using a ‘feminist reflectionist’ (the authors’ term) reading as an example here, the use of the collective ‘we’ by the authors

serves to other the feminist perspective and experience as outside of the traditional analytical structure the authors advocate. They move toward this complete invalidation by stripping away the relational aspect of a feminist perspective with their interpretation of the character Ripley,

If we look beyond Ripley, the protagonist of *Aliens*, we find that all the characters lie along a continuum running between ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ values, and the survivors of the adventure, male or female, seem to blend the best of both gender identities. (Bordwell et al., 2017. pp. 336–337)

The authors attempt to nullify the feminist perspective by reinforcing a patriarchal, neoliberal view of gender where marginalized voices are chastised for a ‘non-diverse’ consideration of content. The female character should not be singled out as any different than the other characters according to Bordwell et al.’s argument here. So, if a student were to identify with Ripley as an icon of women’s empowerment, the authors have discredited the student’s view and connection to the film.

The reflectionist view in total is dismissed by the last sentence in the section “Genres as Social Reflection” when Bordwell et al. again reify the filmmaker as creator of meaning-making,

Moreover, often what seems to be social reflection is simply the film industry’s effort to exploit the day’s headlines. A genre film *may reflect not the audience’s hope and fears but the filmmakers’ guess about what might sell* [emphasis added]. (p. 337)

The student who may have watched *Aliens* (Cameron, 1986) and identified with Ripley as a strong female character is once again forced by these authors to question their

experience with the film. As well, any future readings on feminist film theory or additional socially concerned film theories has been tainted by Bordwell et al.'s (2017) invalidation of any other type of meaning-making that does not give primacy to the filmmaker and canonical aesthetics. This primacy of a traditional filmmaking value is seen as well in the use of comparison analysis of film types.

By using traditional narrative form as the comparison point from which the student reader is to begin to analyze documentaries, experimental film, and animation, Bordwell et al. present an unspoken hierarchy in filmic types. From the first experiments with the moving image, non-narrative and avant-garde filmmaking have been present. Yet, these textbooks privilege the classic narrative as the standard storytelling practice from which all other film types should be compared. Bordwell et al. begin the chapter on film types by explaining for the student reader, "Viewers and filmmakers distinguish documentary from fiction, experimental films from mainstream fare, and animation from live action filming.... Most of our familiar genres are fiction films; it would be odd to call a documentary about witchcraft a horror film" (p. 128) Why might this be odd? Is it because calling a documentary a horror film or associating it with horror conventions, something a student may do if that is their relationship to the film, goes against the traditional process of film analysis according to academic history? A student whose family experienced the horrors of war may very well equate some horror conventions with documentaries on war. Equating all experiences and connections as the same negates some student experiences and elevates other experiences that align more with traditional film studies.

Each analysis the authors of *Film Art* present in this chapter harkens back to their insistence on form and content as the driving factors of meaning-making. When instructing students on how to think about abstract experimental films, Bordwell et al. introduce categories of theme and variation as organizational patterns for analysis. The authors teach the student to analyze these types of films through specific formal relations—categorical or rhetorical form in documentaries or abstract and associational form in experimental film. The paradox of a category of analysis named ‘abstract form’ aside, the essence of experimental or avant-garde films is their relationship between film and viewer, often an arousing of emotion or distantiation to evoke provocative thought. Forcing an organizing pattern as formal analysis reinforces a constructed knowledge process that privileges westernized patriarchal concepts of schematic classification rather than allowing for a relational aesthetic that brings to the analysis emotional and provocative thought as experienced by the student/viewer.

Bordwell et al. lessen the student-viewer-film interaction when introducing their section on experimental film. They point only to the filmmakers’ motivations as pertinent for analysis:

The filmmaker may wish to express personal experiences or viewpoints....  
Alternatively, the filmmaker may seek to convey a mood or a physical quality....  
The filmmaker may also wish to explore some possibilities of the medium  
itself...The experimental filmmaker may tell no story, creating poetic reveries or  
pulsating visual collages.... Alternatively, the filmmaker may create a fictional  
story, but it’s likely to challenge the viewer. (p. 369)

The only mention of a viewer in this introductory section on experimental film is in this last sentence where the viewer’s agency is subordinated to that of the filmmaker. By

reducing the relationship of film and viewer to one that promotes only the filmmaker's choices as aligned with themes or variations so that we can organize the abstract aspects, the relational characteristics of the viewing experience are denied. Through their privileging of genre studies and comparisons of types of films to traditional narrative fiction, the authors of *Film Art* construct a process of analysis and appreciation that is reliant on conventional film studies while marginalizing the relationship between student and film. The three other textbooks continue the example set by Bordwell et al. in their chapters on types of films.

*Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) and *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018) each follow the aesthetic chapters with chapters on genre, experimental, and documentary film, aligning with *Film Art's* (Bordwell et al., 2017) basic organization. *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) places the genre discussion into a larger section on "Cinema and Culture," while *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018) includes its chapters on film types and genre in a section entitled "Organizational Structure: from stories to genre." Placing these chapters after sections examining aesthetic qualities of film presents for the student a path that organizes a particular way of analyzing films based in traditional film studies—learn the technical specifics so that you can analyze them according to genre and type conventions. *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) positions the chapter on types of movies ahead of the aesthetic chapters, using genre and type as introductions to aesthetic principles. Though one aspect of traditional studies is introduced here first, the implication is the same—learn one so that you can analyze in comparison to the other. Barsam and Monahan's (2016) placement, though

presenting a slightly varied path, continues the privileging of aesthetic elements and schematic categories of films as a process for meaning-making and analysis. As with *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017), the organization of these textbooks and influence on the construction of knowledge aid in the continuation of a hidden curriculum that places value on classic ideals of form and realism.

When discussing types of films (e.g., documentary, animation, avant-garde) each of the three textbooks uses narrative film as the normalized form by which all other types should be compared. *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) titled their chapter on film types “Alternatives to Narrative Fiction Film: Documentary and Avant-garde Films.” The use of terms like ‘alternative,’ ‘experimentation,’ and phrases such as ‘challenges to’ permeate the film types chapters from each textbook when describing elements of any type of film that does not fall into the narrative category. The use of these words that other any film that is not classically narrative reinforces the traditional ways of analyzing film, thus teaching the new film student that classic (read: Hollywood) narrative should be held as the normal by which all other film types should be compared. Rather than trying to pull together an analysis of each section of film types in these three textbooks, which would prove unwieldy and too expansive in scope, I instead focus on the genre studies chapters for this section. Using genre conventions as a point of analysis and comparison, I examine how *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011), *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018), and *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) construct student knowledge of genre studies and iconography by foregrounding the filmmaker’s meaning-making rather than the student’s relationship to the film artifact.

In limited contrast to *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017), where the authors' formalist theoretical foundations privilege a film's form and content as the driver of meaning-making, the other three textbooks I analyze appear at first glance to give more power to the viewer's meaning-making process. *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018) and *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) allow for viewer—thus, student—agency in their discussions of genre conventions and various genre theories. In describing genre categorizations as “a kind of social contract,” Corrigan and White (2018) highlight the “bond between filmmakers and audiences” (p. 344) as a factor in the ways in which meaning is made and shared. Focusing on the conventions of genre, Corrigan and White present the viewer as an integral part of the process of creating narrative expectations in genres citing the viewer's “important role...in determining a genre and the ways that this role connects genres to a specific social, cultural, or national environment” (p. 347). The authors continue the analogy of a social contract when later describing six genres by explaining their intended purpose to be “defin[ing] each genre as it has appeared in different cultures and at different points in history and as its social contract changes with different audiences” (p. 348). It seems as if the relationship between viewer and film is a necessary component of genre studies for Corrigan and White as they attempt to assert in a section entitled “Making Sense of Film Genres” that appears just after this discussion of six varying genre categories.

The frameworks that Corrigan and White articulate for a student's use in analyzing genres each consider the relationship between viewer and filmmaker as a way that classifies films into “certain conceptual frameworks” (p. 365) based on prescriptive

(i.e., a somewhat set in stone view) or descriptive perspectives (i.e., a view that allows for adaptive changes over time). Each of these two frameworks can then be sub-described as historical, revisionist, or local/global in their approaches according to a viewer's understanding of and experience with the genre conventions over a cultural, historical, and time-specific period. However, rather than finalizing the meaning-making process by keeping agency in the hands of the viewer, the authors privilege the meaning-making of hypothetical filmmakers, journalists, and film historians to show how these frameworks "can point viewers to particular readings of films" (p. 368). Specifically, the journalist or filmmaker might "reference a particular genre as a framework for *how a specific movie should be seen and evaluated* [emphasis added]" (p. 368), or the historian might analyze a film from a certain perspective in which "the resulting model of a film genre reflects the prescriptive or descriptive approach used and *generates meanings that limit, expand, or focus a viewer's understanding accordingly* [emphasis added]" (p. 368). After providing the student with some power in the 'social contract' that according to Corrigan and White helps define genre classification and therefore meaning, the authors take that power away by explaining that more privileged viewing positions actually enforce how most film viewers make-meaning.

In *Film*, Pramaggiore and Wallis (2011) present four critical approaches to genre analysis in a section entitled "Using Genre to Interpret Films." None of these approaches focuses solely on the viewer's connection to the film itself, rather each incorporates the viewing experience into its analytical approach on a perfunctory level. The first analytical approach that Pramaggiore and Wallis introduce addresses how aesthetic appeal relies on



the viewer's comparison of "one film against its antecedents" (p. 402). A second approach considers thematic repetition that places the viewer in a passive position: "The tales begin to inform the way audiences interpret the world around them" (p. 402). A third view investigates how genres change over time, "appeal[ing] to popular sentiment, whether or not viewers are aware of their concerns and anxieties" (p. 403). Finally, a fourth view explores "how notable directors...work with genre conventions to assert a personal vision" (p. 405). Only in one of these analytical approaches do the authors counter the lack of agency for the viewer. When discussing "Genre and the Status Quo," the second analytical approach, which deals particularly with interpretation, the authors argue that by presuming there are some genre conventions that are always present and static, scholars proposing this type of analysis "assume that viewer's responses are standardized—that audiences are only capable of reading a film according to dominant values" (p. 403). This acknowledgement of possible multiple readings by differing viewers moves toward a more relational approach but halts that movement by not developing the thought further. Pramaggiore and Wallis follow this quote with a short paragraph using a popular horror film as an example of varied interpretations. However, the discussion is brief and only provides two possible interpretations, neither of which really consider why certain viewers might read the film in particular ways. While the authors give students four approaches to analytical practice in film studies, none move far enough into the realm of a student's identity as it relates to the meaning-making that occurs with each viewing, no matter how we might categorize the film's supposed genre.

Of the four textbooks I analyze in this section, *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) provides the least in depth discussion of genre studies. The authors focus on the cultural conditions that play into the formation of genre categories. While it appears that the viewer has an important role in the establishment of these genres, the authors present a subtle deterministic view that “cultural conditions inspire artists to tell certain kinds of stories (and audiences to respond to them)” (p. 86). This argument is reinforced later in a discussion on the film industry’s use of genre expectations in business practice. “The film industry may ultimately exploit a genre’s cultural resonance, but only after cultural conditions motivate enough individual artists and viewers to create the genre in the first place” (p. 88). In placing the power for developing genre conventions and expectations in the realm of cultural changes, the authors deny the agency of the filmmaker or viewer in challenging these changes. Barsam and Monahan reify the mass appeal of genres by likening their use to an old business adage, “Give the people what they want, and they will buy it” (p. 87). In particular for a viewer who may reside within the marginalized borders of a given culture and, therefore, may not align with the popular reading of a genre, this deterministic view continues to elide their identities and possible alternative readings of genre narratives or iconography. How might we address students’ relationships with particular genres and their conventions, giving them more power in their interactions with media texts? Considering meaning-making and fantasy films shows one way in which we might approach the viewer relationship.

If we consider the fantasy film genre, we could and should teach students about the basic conventions and narrative arcs of fantasy: magic, heroic journeys, mythical creatures and lands. Our instruction, however needs to go beyond these traditional culturally agreed upon characteristics that lead to certain meanings to include discussions of student identity. The realm of fandom, particularly centered around fantasy, horror, and science fiction genres, is a large force within relational aspects of these filmic texts and certain viewers. Fan conventions, social media groups, gaming, and cosplay add a cultural texture to the readings of these films for many student viewers who interact with the film in more immersive contexts. These students find a community within this fandom and lived interaction with the text that goes beyond traditional categories and iconography as a way to analyze genre. Viewer relationships to filmic texts that do not necessarily conform to genre or aesthetic ideals are an important aspect to the ways in which meaning is made and in how the student articulates their understanding of concepts and analytical processes. If we recognize the importance of the relational aesthetic and counter against the traditional forms of meaning-making, then we have to also re-think the ways in which these introductory textbooks teach the written analytical process.

### **Traditional Critical Analysis**

The ways in which our students present their analytical projects is also a major focus of introductory film studies textbooks. These assignments traditionally have been analytical essays; therefore, it is important to examine the ways in which these authors are teaching students to write about film. One of the aspects that many general education,

introductory film studies classes have in common is a writing assignment, usually from a perspective of film criticism or history.

In *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017) and *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016), the authors do not specifically teach the student reader a detailed process of how to construct a scholarly paper or critical review of a film. Instead they provide an analytical process that focuses on form, content, and style. Barsam and Monahan (2016) add a more detailed discussion surrounding cultural considerations of the analytical process that Bordwell et al. (2017) subordinate to objective analysis. Other than this distinction, most of the information in *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) parallels the information in *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017) including the use of analytical examples in each chapter.

Bordwell et al. (2017) argue that certain standards exist in a film's form and director's style that allow for evaluation across a slate of films. For the authors this means that personal preference, which may stem from a student's relationship to the film artifact or filmmaker, "need not be the basis for judging a film's quality. Instead we can try to make a *relatively objective evaluation* by using specific criteria" (p. 61). Later the authors minimize criteria based on personal preference aligned with realism or morality, which they note are "well suited to particular purposes" (p. 61) along with other criteria that might be more subjective like originality and complexity when they state, "It's fun to share our personal tastes.... but a deeper, objective evaluation usually teaches more about how films work" (p. 62). For the authors, an effective analysis rests more on objectivity relating to a film's form and style than a subjective reading that might include both a

formal analysis and moral criteria to present a more inter-relational approach to meaning-making between viewer and filmmaker. Bordwell et al. remind the student again to “think like *a filmmaker*” (p. 307) rather than a viewer who brings with them unique histories and expectations to the meaning-making experience.

Barsam and Monahan (2016) prioritize formal analysis as a process for writing about film by providing the student with “an understanding of how film grammar conveys meaning, mood, and information *as the essential foundation for any further study of cinema* [emphasis added]” (p. 14). Unlike Bordwell et al. (2017), Barsam and Monahan (2016) allow for a recognition of the relational aspects of analytical writing without minimizing these aspects’ influence on the process: “Personal views provide a legitimate perspective, as long as we recognize and acknowledge how they may color our interpretation” (p. 15). After presenting an example of using formal analysis to read the film *Juno* (Reitman, 2007), the authors of *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) continue the examination of analytical writing styles that differ from formal analysis in a section entitled “Alternative Approaches to Formal Analysis” in which they consider “many other legitimate frameworks for analysis” (p. 19). While the authors’ intent may have been to open up the possibilities and choices of analysis for the student, the organization and wording used in this section serves to marginalize these choices in comparison to the essential foundation of film study formal analysis. After utilizing a formal analysis for a scene in *Juno*, the authors present several possible alternative analyses including class, feminist, and cultural perspectives. Barsam and Monahan reinforce the primacy of a formal analytical process later in the chapter when they

examine *The Hunger Games* film franchise (Lawrence, 2013, 2014, 2015; Ross, 2012). I take up this marginalizing of other perspectives in each of these textbooks in the following section. For now, the effect on the student's writing could very well be that any choice of analytical approach other than formal is pushed aside when their original idea might be considered outside the norm of traditional analysis that the authors advocate in the primary position

In contrast to the two textbooks evaluated previously, which do not delve into the writing process for students, *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) and *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018) include chapters devoted to writing about film. Both borrow from traditional English composition course materials to instruct students on grammar, organization, and research. Each textbook also distinguishes between academic and popular types of analyses. Neither textbook addresses the student's identity and relationship to a film's form or content when considering the analyses as interpretive. Instead the authors relate personal connections with a film artifact to evaluative claims that are often dismissed as incongruent with academic writing, thus reinforcing a style of analysis steeped within traditional English and film studies curriculum.

*Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) introduces the student reader to the difference between evaluative and interpretive writing by seemingly prioritizing the evaluative as "the most sophisticated argument to make because it relies on the speaker's ability to describe details from the film accurately and then to interpret what the film is trying to accomplish using these details" (p. 29). These evaluative claims, however, are linked to overall opinion in which "standards will differ from person to person" (p. 29). Standard

readings of filmic texts, for the authors, are what distinguish scholarly interpretive claims that “move the conversation to a new level” (p. 30). These interpretive analyses, supposedly without personal aspects, are based on meaning-making that considers “the way that stories, characters, camera angles, sound effects, and other elements of film art interact to produce intense emotional and thought-provoking experiences” (p. 30). How though might a student speak to “emotional or thought-provoking experiences” without some reflection on self and identity? It appears that Pramaggiore and Wallis are asking for an objective approach that focuses on the aesthetic and narrative aspects discussed in the book yet conflating those objective standards with outcomes based on subjective readings. Pramaggiore and Wallis are not outright rejecting the role of identity and histories at play when students attempt film analysis, yet they are not addressing the effects of our relational status with a film artifact. It is an unspoken aspect that needs to be spoken. The authors elevate the interpretive claim to academic status by describing it as a process that “helps to develop logical thinking and writing skills” that “also demands organization and keen insight” (p. 30). Yet evaluative claims can do the same, as the authors have pointed out in the quote earlier in which they seem to praise subjective claims before subordinating them here to a more academic style of writing. Can a student also enhance their critical thinking skill set through a means that is not necessarily tied to a specific type of analytical writing that privileges the traditional form?

Pramaggiore and Wallis continue to deem the subjective aspect of analysis as inferior when discussing various types of writing assignments that students may

encounter in film courses. The authors introduce the writing chapter by describing the purpose of these assignments:

When instructors ask students to write about film in an academic setting, they expect students to consider how a film (or a group of films) functions as a complex artistic and cultural document, in the hope that students will more fully appreciate the medium's social significance, artistic potential, and diversity of forms. (p. 37)

The expectations of the assignment presented in this description place all the onus on the student to accept a certain standard viewpoint of a film without any consideration for how the student's interactions with the filmic text might influence the analysis. The student's relational aspects, their identity and histories, that might influence the analysis are dismissed as less important than appreciating the cultural influence of the medium through an established set of criteria. Evaluative claims are equated with the popular film review while being disregarded as "irrelevant or inappropriate" (p. 43) in academic styles of film writing. While the authors do not directly link a student's identity with evaluative writing, it is easy to see how evaluative claims of "a good movie" or "a bad movie" (p. 58) could be misunderstood by an introductory film student as trivializing their relationship to a film and, therefore, not considered as academic in thought. This is the point in the process where self-reflective activities can add to the critical thinking skill set and enhance a student's ability to articulate meaning-making. Pramaggiore and Wallis do encourage some self-reflective thought for students in their discussion on popular film review writing but only from a like or dislike standpoint and then place the burden of understanding the film completely on the student, "Try to avoid knee-jerk reactions.



Instead, begin by considering what a film is trying to accomplish and how it tries to accomplish these things” (p. 59). By minimizing the role of the evaluative in academic writing and ignoring the relational aspect of the film viewing experience, the authors reinforce traditional film studies standards. The construction of knowledge here places the student in a passive vessel role, preventing them from learning how to recognize their own value within the relational aspects of the experience.

*The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018) spends the majority of the page count in its chapter on film writing discussing the formal elements used in constructing an academic paper. In a short introductory section of the chapter, the authors distinguish between evaluative and interpretive writing. This discussion, however, presents a cognitively dissonant state that simultaneously hails and dismisses the student relationship to film. In the first sentence the authors explain, “Writing extends the complex relationship we have with films by challenging us to articulate our feelings and ideas and to communicate our responses convincingly” (p. 410). Then, two paragraphs later they describe the goal for a student’s analysis: “Useful and insightful writing always balances personal opinion with critical objectivity—writing with a detached response to offer judgements based on facts and evidence with which others would, or could agree” (p. 410). How might we consider our complex relationship with films yet also maintain a detached response? The very nature of a relationship, especially one that is complex, requires connection, which is in direct conflict with detachment. Here as well, the authors have placed the onus of meaning-making in writing solely on the student and requiring that they only convincingly write something with which others “would or could agree.”

The authors place the student in the position of adhering to a majority view that might differ from their own. Perhaps they have a truly original position with which others may not agree...yet. Does this invalidate their meaning-making? If the student is forced to think as if their writing must convince some authority to agree with their analysis, then their freedom to explore their own meaning-making is greatly reduced.

Not only are student choices reduced based on the minimalization of evaluative claims or non-majority views, they also are given very little leeway in how to construct a film analysis. *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) and *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018) teach the student how to prepare and write the film analysis based on traditional English composition guidelines. From taking notes, to knowing the audience, to developing a thesis, to conducting research, to organizing an outline, and finally writing the paper, the authors follow the same script for traditional academic writing. Each textbook points to the logical and critical thinking skills required in making effective rhetorical arguments. Nothing is mentioned about student identity or standpoint in these formal discussions.

That these textbooks teach students to organize and produce a film analysis based on traditional literary analysis is not surprising since the organization of the curriculum along with its canonical foundation is akin to introductory composition and literature courses. Any theoretical practice that might approach the analytical process through a different lens is relegated to sections of chapters where the authors explain other ways of looking. This othering of diverse voices illuminates an aspect of the textbooks that stems not only from the authors' perspectives but also from the organization of the chapters and

a focus on classical ideas of aesthetics. These characteristics of the textbooks point to a curriculum that is multi-disciplinary rather than interdisciplinary.

### **A Multi-Disciplinary Curriculum**

It is telling that out of the four textbooks discussed here only two address in detail any theoretical approaches that challenge the traditional aesthetic, auteur, and genre analysis process. *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) and *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018) both contain chapters devoted to a discussion of various film theories. *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017) and *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) do not stray far from their formalist roots. Locating additional analytical voices within these two texts was a lesson in perseverance in trying to continue a method process that could stand up to questions of validity. I was able to find some mention in one but not the other.

*Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016), as briefly discussed earlier, includes a section entitled “Alternative Approaches to Analysis.” The title of the section itself establishes any type of approach other than formal as outside of even analysis itself. Therefore, when the authors briefly discuss feminist or class interpretations of *Juno* (Reitman, 2007) and *The Hunger Games* franchise (Lawrence, 2013, 2014, 2015; Ross, 2012), these theoretical perspectives are presented as other than traditional. The authors set up these alternative analyses by telling the student that “*given the right interpretive scrutiny* [emphasis added], our case study film [here Juno] may also speak eloquently about social conditions and attitudes” (Barsam & Monahan, 2016, p. 19). By naming these analyses as alternative and placing on them the caveat of being the right kind of interpretation, the analytical voices that seek a space within the traditional film studies

curriculum are continually elided even when given a small space within the textbook. Again, in an attempt to be fair to the authors, they do end the chapter by stating, “Formal and cultural analysis are both useful approaches to looking at movies” (p. 32). However, the first pages of the textbook set up the formal analysis as the norm and then any additional analysis as other than, thus, constructing a hierarchy that reinforces the hidden curriculum of film studies.

At least *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) gives some space to additional analytical lenses; *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017) does not address tradition-challenging film theories at all. A cursory glance at the indices for both of these textbooks for ‘queer theory,’ ‘feminist theory,’ or ‘critical race theory’ reveals nothing, not a mention in either textbook. Barsam and Monahan (2016) lump these additional perspectives together as ‘cultural analysis.’ Yet, as we have seen, the traditional theories of form, authorship, and type are heavily covered. This limited focus most obviously has to do with the authors’ scholarship as formalists, in particular Bordwell et al. (2017). *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) follows closely with the formalist arguments set forth in *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017).

A close reading of Bordwell et al.’s (2017) textbook reveals various filmic examples used for analysis that could be read from additional theoretical perspectives, yet this is never undertaken by the authors. Other than small discussions of cultural influences on audience interpretation, the identity of student viewers is not directly addressed. Barsam and Monahan’s (2016) textbook does include very brief discussions on “LGBT Movies” (p. 486) and “African American Movies” (p. 487) but only in the

context of a chapter on the current state of the industry, not theoretical perspectives.

Films mentioned in these brief sections include some from outside of Hollywood, yet all films used as examples were produced within the last three decades. It is as if there were no LGBTQIA+ or African-American films prior to the 1980s—no Oscar Micheaux, no Dorothy Arzner.

### **Othering Non-Canonical Perspectives**

Setting aside textbooks that offer no challenging views to the traditional film studies curriculum, an analysis of the other two textbooks shows that even the inclusion of perspectives that challenge traditional film theories does not mean that all theories are placed on equal footing. From a purely organizational standpoint, the film theories that challenge mainstream views are positioned as other by their inclusion in a separate chapter rather than integrated throughout the text. In *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018), a chapter entitled “Critical Perspectives: Reading and Writing About Film” includes a historical look at film theory from the beginnings of the industry through postmodernism. This chronological pattern, while an understandable organizing tool for showing how theories build upon and respond to each other, serves to position formalism and realism as the traditional theories that provide a basis for study. While the Greek foundational roots of realism and formalism are explained, feminism, queer theory, and critical race theory are not discussed in terms of their cultural development as concepts that tackled social issues prior to their advancement in film studies. Any theories, such as these, that challenge traditional concepts are diminished through the construction of knowledge set forth by both organization and information left out.

In keeping with the theme of this study, I want to mainly focus here on the inclusion of queer film theory in Corrigan and White's (2018) chapter. In order to set up the analysis of this discussion, first I consider two other film theories that work to represent marginalized voices—feminist film theory and critical race film theory. Under a subheading entitled "Theories of Gender and Sexuality," the authors include both feminist and queer film theory. For the discussion of feminist film theory, Corrigan and White spend the bulk of the section explaining Laura Mulvey's (1975) "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" and then thematic challenges to this essay. However, none of the other scholars or their specific works that challenge Mulvey are named. The work of feminism culturally is devalued when in the closing paragraph the authors state, "Overall, feminism has affected the relatively young discipline of film theory more than it has affected more established ones" (Corrigan & White, 2018. pp. 395–396). While this sentence is a bit confusing—we could assume 'ones' refers to other theories, those that might fall under the umbrella term 'grand theories'—what the wording serves to do is to position feminism as a weaker movement that cannot break through the barriers of westernized ideals that serve as the bedrock of formalist and realist film theories.

Another section of Corrigan and White's (2018) chapter on theory places three fields of study under the section title "Cultural Studies." Here is where we find a subsection entitled "Race and Representation" that very briefly discusses race, ethnicity, nationality, colonialism, and postcolonialism. All of this in one and a half pages. Robert Stam and Ella Shohat are the only two scholars discussed whose work focuses on multiculturalism represented in popular culture. Otherwise, no one working in critical

race theory is mentioned. In fact, the phrase ‘critical race theory’ is never introduced to the student reader. The introductory paragraph of this subheading of yet another subheading of the chapter is all the space given to a vital issue within film representation and production. Granted, the authors have included this scholarship under a discussion of cultural studies where the intersections of race and media are often highlighted, yet at this point in the development of critical race theory as a discipline and crucial work being done by critical race scholars, a section at least the length devoted to feminist film theory with mention of the leading scholars needs to be included here. Corrigan and White further disparage work of critical race and multicultural theorists as they attempt to highlight multicultural representation present in the American film industry. In a continued discussion of Stam and Shohat’s work, Corrigan and White (2018) state,

But Stam and Shohat’s examples show that American cinema often reflects a multicultural society in other ways. The importance of the western as a genre or the plantation as a motif gives evidence of a cultural preoccupation with racial difference and conflicts at the origin of national identity. *Although stereotyped in such film representations, people of color stand at the center of the nation’s definition of itself* [emphasis added]. Hollywood films, from dramas like *Crash* (2004) to animated films like *Zootopia* (2016) often incorporate multiculturalism as part of the very definition of America. (pp. 400–401)

For a student reader of First Peoples or African-American descent, the western genre and plantation motif do not represent Hollywood’s attempt to show multiculturalism, they represent mass killings, loss of homeland, and chattel slavery. Dismissing these narratives as “although stereotyped”—as if this makes it all okay—is demoralizing for these students. The choice of filmic examples in the quote as well are disturbing as one represents a neatly wrapped package of Hollywood’s attempt to tackle racism in its own

city, where the white savior trope is personified, and the other is a film where all the characters are animated, anthropomorphic animals. Each film negates the lived realities for people of color in service to a feel-good narrative. The authors even acknowledge the anti-multiculturalism stance of classic film and, therefore, traditional film studies. They state, “Cinematic history reinforces the assumption of a white, Western spectator-subject” (Corrigan & White, 2018, p. 400), yet they continue this trajectory of study throughout their textbook. The organization of this chapter along with language and examples used reinforces an ideology of marginalization for any relationship to a filmic text that challenges the status quo.

Keeping in mind the above brief analysis of two theoretical positions that challenge traditional film theory, when we look at the section on queer film theory, we can see a pattern develop—Corrigan and White (2018) present marginalized voices as challenging the system, yet the authors continue to diminish the power of those voices. As a reminder of the organization, “Queer Theory” is a subheading of a subsection entitled “Theories of Gender and Sexuality” in the chapter on film theories in *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018). The authors’ discussion of queer film theory is mostly based in its opposition to psychoanalysis and Mulvey’s (1975) work presented in the preceding section on feminist film theory. No queer film scholar is mentioned in this section and no particular book or article is discussed. There is a sentence defining gender performativity, yet Judith Butler is never cited. This is telling since in other sections in the chapter that discuss westernized patriarchal theories such as Semiotics or Poststructuralism, Saussure and Lacan are given ample space and credit for their



theoretical positions. While the merits of equating Butler here with Saussure and Lacan could be debated, is not that the point? The student reader would not be able to even consider the contributions of each because Butler has not been given credit for her scholarship.

When attempting to define the term ‘queer,’ for the student reader, as it relates to media and its use in describing queer viewers’ interpretations, Corrigan and White (2018) diminish the title of the discipline along with the interpretations that queer theory scholars posit. The last paragraph in the section on queer theory serves to elide the use of the term queer by positioning it as representative of outside the realm of reality. The authors describe a queer interpretation of a film in contrast to that film’s ideological performance,

Although movies tend to conform to the dominant values of a society (in this case, to heterosexuality as the norm), they also make *unconscious appeals to our fantasies, which may not be as conformist, and the term queer captures this antinormative potential* [emphasis added]. (p. 396)

Here the authors utilize psychoanalysis, which in an earlier paragraph they present as one of the grand theories that queer theory challenges. Their utilization of psychoanalysis presents the interpretive process for queer viewers as without agency and residing in a space outside of reality, something that happens unconsciously and as fantasy. The phrasing gives the power of the interpretation to the filmic text and its position as a dominant cultural influence, even when viewed by someone challenging the normative representation.

The final sentence in the brief section on queer film theory leaves the LGBTQIA+ student in a position of being outside the normative when the authors contrast, indirectly, a queer theory reading with that of a reading by a traditionalist, “Queer theory allows for interpretations *that value style over content and ambiguity over certainty* [emphasis added]” (p. 397). The use of these two phrases of comparison presents a queer reading that holds no real meaning based on the earlier chapters in *The Film Experience* that teach the student reader to interpret films based on content (e.g., genre, narrative, mise-en-scene) and on certainty (e.g., appropriate meanings, historical precedents, aesthetic principles, construction of analytical essays). If a student relates to a film through a queer theory reading, their interpretation is diminished by a description of queer scholarship as outside of reality and traditional ways of viewing. The authors construction of knowledge in their section on queer film theory continues to marginalize queer scholarship and LGBTQIA+ student identities.

Corrigan and White present information about film scholarship that resists traditional readings by describing the major tenets of each theory individually. This sectioning off of multiple theories establishes a system of separation rather than integration, furthering the otherness of each. The only other textbook to examine additional film scholarship does so through a consideration of ideological themes present in film. This perspective would appear to allow for a more integrative look at film scholarship as overlapping concerns, yet the organization of information continues to separate the theories as independent endeavors, continuing the multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary approach.

*Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) considers challenges to traditional film analysis in a chapter entitled “Film and Ideology” as part of the final section of the textbook on “Cinema and Culture.” This chapter contains topical subsections describing ideological criticisms in a loosely based historical timeline. Pramaggiore and Wallis (2011) deserve credit for including (dis)ability scholarship in their chapter. They are the only textbook analyzed in this project to do so.

In each section on ideological viewpoints, the authors highlight the work of one or two major scholars or critics. The usual scholars are covered including Mulvey, Dyer, and Rich within their respective ideological sections. Perhaps because *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) looks through a lens of ideology rather than theory when presenting information on ways of viewing that challenge the traditional, the chapter appears to open up varying avenues for multiple interpretations of a film. In the opening section, “Ideology and Film Spectatorship” that introduces definitions and overall foundational theories, the authors describe the historical shift in scholarship, “Film scholars no longer characterize the cinema as an agent of total repression and generally reject the idea that there is one identifiable ‘message’ that emanates from popular films” (Pramaggiore, & Wallis, 2011, p. 336). At first glance, this statement would seem to put the power of interpretation in the hands of the viewer, yet the description of the message as coming from the film rather than as a negotiation between viewer and filmic text negates the ideological reading from the viewer’s standpoint. In the discussions that follow, interpretive readings are addressed by the authors as based in scholarship or cultural

criticism or inherent in the films themselves. Beyond the aforementioned explanation of spectator studies, the identity of the viewer is not a consideration.

Again, to give Pramaggiore and Wallis credit, the consideration of resistant views to traditional film study through the lens of ideology presents an examination that allows for a more integrated view of film scholarship. However, the construction of knowledge within their chapter continues the sectioning off of ideas into topical discussions as each ideological view is delineated in its own space: race, gender, sexuality, and (dis)ability. This continues the trend of multi-disciplinarity rather than interdisciplinarity that we saw earlier in *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018). It is as if ideologies are confined to one characteristic and never overlap into intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and (dis)ability. If film studies does not consider identity as intersectional, then we have a long way to go in catching up with more recent scholarship on identity as assemblages.

Pramaggiore and Wallis (2011) provide the student reader with greater detail in consideration of New Queer Cinema theory and filmic examples as compared to *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018), yet they too fall into using language that serves to marginalize the LGBTQIA+ student experience. In explaining the reclamation of the term ‘queer’ by activists, Pramaggiore and Wallis define the term as “an umbrella term of pride designating *a variety of non-normative genders and sexualities* [emphasis added]” (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011, p. 334). Granted, this textbook was published in 2011 and perhaps the authors would reconsider this description today, however pitting the genderqueer community against dominant heteronormativity in this way perpetuates

the harm this comparison can cause. A student who identifies as queer has been told here that they are ‘not normal’ or ‘deviant.’

Using language that appears at first to be supportive can often be interpreted by individual students in harmful ways. This use of language occurs in varying ways across these introductory textbooks as we will see in the following section that explores more examples. Critically thinking about and correcting these harmful descriptions can move us forward to a more inclusive and interdisciplinary curriculum.

### **Marginalizing Language and Filmic Examples**

The previous analysis of the organization of these textbooks reveals how an overall adherence to traditional film studies curriculum has led to a formulaic and marginalizing construction of knowledge in introductory film studies courses that rely on these books as their pathway to film literacy for students. For the remainder of the chapter I turn my analysis toward a consideration of how language and examples employed by the authors of these textbooks continues the harmful othering of marginalized student identities.

I grouped together the four textbooks discussed so far due to their relatively common organizational patterns that begin with chapters on film language and content before moving on to aesthetics, narrative, genre considerations, film history, writing conventions, and in some cases, ideological interpretations. The sections all culminate in an analytical process of meaning-making for the student. The fifth textbook I analyzed does contain many of these same chapters, yet the purpose of the textbook is not about student meaning-making. Louis Giannetti (2018), the author of *Understanding Movies*

states in the preface, “My purpose is not to teach viewers how to respond to moving images, but to suggest some of the reasons people respond as they do” (p. xxiii). To accomplish this, Giannetti weaves the debate between formalism and realism throughout each chapter. Like the other four textbooks, *Understanding Movies* (Giannetti, 2018), focuses on the filmmaker’s use of cinematic language and aesthetic principles in communicating meaning, yet the authors of the first four textbooks describe the purpose of their books in language that aligns more with student meaning-making, even if they do not necessarily follow through in the text. Barsam and Monahan (2016) tell their readers that one goal is “to be able to say why we feel so strongly about particular movies while others are forgotten” (p. xvii). Pramaggiore and Wallis (2011) hope to give readers the “tools necessary for analyzing film and creating interpretive arguments” (p. x), a purpose similar to Corrigan and White’s (2018) “aim to help students learn the language of film and synthesize those languages into a cohesive knowledge that will, in turn, enhance their movie watching” (p. v). *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017), the closest in analytical perspective to Giannetti’s text leaves room open to student interpretation and experience, “We’d be happy if our ideas can help you to understand the films you enjoy” (p. x). Based on the stated purposes of the previously analyzed texts, Giannetti’s forecloses student response in deference to considerations of why a hypothesized audience might respond. This sets up a textbook that in organization and tone is more about pouring knowledge into an empty vessel than empowering students to create meaning.

## Holistic Disparaging

*Understanding Movies* (Giannetti, 2018) delves directly into aesthetic conventions with the first nine chapters presenting information on the various elements that together make up the filmic text and language. There are no chapters devoted to film history, the film industry, or national cinemas. Some of this information is mentioned within the first nine chapters but usually as examples for the particular technical aspect under discussion. Like the first four textbooks, Giannetti (2018) adheres to traditional knowledge production in these chapters, teaching the reader key terms and assumed meaning behind a filmmaker's choice. The last three chapters in the textbook cover ideology, film theory, and a concluding chapter that combines all information into an analysis of *Citizen Kane* (Welles, 1941). The chapters on ideology and film theory best reflect the tone and perspective present in Giannetti's textbook.

As with the previous discussion on film theory chapters, Giannetti's (2018) "Critique" chapter highlights the traditional film theories based on form, content, the auteur, semiotics, and historiography. Each of these sections includes discussion of the major European writers whose work serves as foundational. *Understanding Movies* is an interesting analytical project in examining what information it leaves out as well as language and examples used. The word choices Giannetti utilizes particularly serve to remind the theorists who challenge foundational ideas why they are devalued as other than the traditional

The one section of Giannetti's "Critique" chapter that moves somewhat toward including ideas that refine and resist traditional readings is entitled "Eclectic and

Synthesizing Approaches.” He defines eclectic criticism as writing that “place[s] a movie in whatever context seems most appropriate, drawing from diverse systems, and styles” (p. 474). The author appears to only consider popular film critics in this section, a critique from the perspective of “journalists for the most part, but their emphasis is more on evaluation than on mere content analysis” (p. 454). He references Pauline Kael and Roger Ebert among others. What is telling here is that Giannetti also includes a passing reference to feminist writers as an example of eclecticism, “Sometimes critics combine an ideological perspective—such as feminism—with practical criticism, sociology, and history, as in the criticism of Molly Haskell and B. Ruby Rich” (p. 474). Though Haskell and Rich both are film critics in the journalistic sense, they are also academics whose work leaves indelible footprints on film theory and criticism. Other than an additional quote attributed to Haskell, no other mention of these two scholars appears in Giannetti’s textbook. Using them as an example in a section that mostly focuses on critical journalism and referencing feminism here in passing rather than as a movement that challenges the traditional foundations highlighted in the chapter is a disservice to their work. Giannetti further diminishes not only Haskell’s and Rich’s writings, but that of other critics when he states, “For all their vaunted expertise and cultural prestige, eclectic critics have track records that don’t always bear close scrutiny” (p. 478). Showing students that film theories should be criticized for certain shortcomings is important in the learning process (something Giannetti does with each theory he examines). However, the language used in the above critique presents a tone of condescension from someone who would probably align themselves with the more foundational perspective of theorists



who “are usually professional academics, often the author of books on how movies can be studied on a more philosophical level” (p. 454). This definition would also describe the work of Haskell and Rich in addition to the overwhelmingly white, European, male theorists examined in this chapter, but their feminist work is not presented as on the same level.

Another marginalizing practice that is evident in Giannetti’s chapter on film critique is seen, or rather, not seen in the analytical examples used. Throughout *Understanding Movies*, Giannetti includes numerous visuals and examples in colorful boxes with accompanying text that reference the discussion happening in that section. Of the 53 such examples that occur in the “Critiques” chapter, only one film was directed by a female filmmaker. And, while some are examples of films from other countries, not one is from an American filmmaker of color. This is not just a trend in Giannetti’s text, as I argue in the next section. We mostly see diversity present in chapters that specifically delineate between theories of ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality. This sets up a continued othering as part of their construction of knowledge. This marginalization is reified through both implicit and explicit biases present in the descriptions of identities that resist the dominant ideologies.

### **Implicit and Explicit Biases**

In analyzing language and examples, I concentrate on specific instances of films, filmmakers, theories, or ideologies with LGBTQIA+ themes or identities present within the textbooks. It is probably no surprise that the same marginalization that occurs with LGBTQIA+ considerations is also evident when we analyze these textbooks for critical

race, feminist, or multicultural discourse. I delineate a few examples of marginalizing discourse in general before limiting my focus to LGBTQIA+ examples. I have chosen to concentrate on LGBTQIA+ representation for reasons discussed in the introduction, though I wish to reiterate again that as a student of cultural studies with an interest in assemblages of identity, I am very aware that all identities interweave dynamically through space and time. My focus for this project and in this section in particular is due to my own identification and personal critique of my past use of curriculum based on traditional film studies. My hope is that a close analysis of LGBTQIA+ representation here can open up avenues of additional studies and curriculum change.

### **Othering Language**

I first focus on Giannetti's (2018) text as it serves as the most egregious example of othering under the guise of inclusion. In Giannetti's chapter entitled "Ideology," the author follows the same organizational sectioning off of various ideological views as do the previous authors. Giannetti begins the chapter by setting up a clash of value systems in a "left-center-right" model aligned with political ideologies (p. 413). The remainder of this section sets up what Giannetti terms, unfortunately, "bipolar categories" (p. 413). Examples of opposing ideologies include "secular versus religious" (p. 416), "outsiders versus insiders" (p. 419), and "sexual freedom versus marital monogamy" (p. 421). Within each section, the author uses the terms 'leftists' and 'rightists' to describe the ends of each spectrum, reinforcing a binary approach that seems to have forgotten the 'center' portion of his political analogy and continuing an 'us' versus 'them' mentality that is all too prevalent in our society today.

Giannetti divides the ideology chapter further into sections on cultural ideologies, including ethnicity, feminism, and queer cinema. The author's biases are present in all three sections through limited descriptions or loaded language. In a discussion of Spike Lee's films, Giannetti states, "Much of Lee's work has been directed at people of his own race" (p. 428). The author describes Lee's (1989) film, *Do the Right Thing*, as an exploration of "the smoldering tensions between black ghetto dwellers and an Italian American family that owns a pizzeria in an inner city neighborhood" (p. 428). He goes on to describe the end to Lee's (1991) *Jungle Fever* as "the lovers calling it quits—defeated by the prejudices of their own communities as well as their own personal feelings" (Giannetti, 2018, p. 428). Evidentially, Giannetti missed the many times Lee critiqued white prejudices in both films and the fact that the Black characters in *Do the Right Thing* (Lee, 1989) lived in the inner city neighborhood where Sal's Famous Pizzeria was located—a city block undergoing gentrification in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. Not exactly the visual that the phrase "black ghetto dweller" presents. Giannetti's biases are also evident in his introductory paragraph on feminism. He describes feminism as "one of several militant ideologies that emerged" during the late 1960s (p. 431). Equating feminism with extremism or violence—as the word militant connotes—reinforces long-standing patriarchal stereotypes of the women's equality movement as radical opposition to traditional American values. Giannetti's chosen words, phrasings, and implicit biases provide a clear example of the hidden curriculum.

*Understanding Movies* (Giannetti, 2018), as a textbook for introductory film studies, is not alone in its presentation of the traditional values inherent within the

classical film curriculum. Examples abound within the other textbooks analyzed. What is very much different and incredibly harmful is the way in which Giannetti approaches the section of his ideology chapter that covers LGBTQIA+ identities. In the introduction of a section entitled “Queer Cinema,” *Understanding Movies* becomes part medical text mixed with part psychology text.

Giannetti (2018) begins the section on LGBTQIA+ cinema with his detailed medical and psychological explanation of homosexuality. In order to give complete coverage to this introduction and resist possible calls that I have taken phrases out of context, I quote the passage in full:

Sexual researchers are by no means in agreement *on what causes homosexuality* [emphasis added]. Following the lead of Freud, such researchers as Alfred Kinsey and William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson regard all sexual behavior as learned, not innate. Freud believed that the libido—sexual energy—is nondiscriminatory, amoral, and channeled by social conventions. In short, we have to learn what’s “normal” sexually. Other researchers believe that homosexuality is inborn, like other genetic characteristics. Recent medical findings on the structure of the brain tend to support a physiological basis for homosexuality.

Both groups agree that gender identity is formed before puberty, before a person has any conscious sense of his or her sexuality. Hard-core heterosexuals who view lesbians and gays as “not natural” are missing the point, these researchers insist. A person’s same-gender orientation is not something he or she chooses. Rather, it chooses them. *Their sexuality is as natural to them as that of heterosexuals* [emphasis added].

The Kinsey Institute has found that homosexuality is more widespread than is generally believed. In a variety of scientific surveys, researchers have estimated that roughly 10 percent of the American population is homosexual. A much larger percentage – as high as 33 percent – have had at least one homosexual experience. Many commentators believe that sexual labels are convenient fictions, *that all of us have our masculine and feminine sides* [emphasis added]. (Giannetti, 2018, p. 443)

The author continues the introduction with historical and present-day examples of LGBTQIA+ persecution around the world, conveniently leaving out any United States history of discrimination, criminalization, and violence against the LGBTQIA+ community. While other textbooks in this study also marginalize the experience of LGBTQIA+ students, none attempt to reduce their experiences to a medical or psychological reason that is compared to the ‘naturalness’ of heterosexuality. To give Giannetti some credit, there are several passages throughout his section on Queer Cinema that illuminate the struggles of the Gay Rights movement, and in-the-closet filmmakers. However, I have not found another section in his textbook that opens with a medical and psychological explanation for identity formation encountered in films. Not the feminism section, not the ‘left-center-right model,’ not the acting chapter—nothing...nowhere. It is as if by explaining the psychological or medical reasons or debates around homosexuality, LGBTQIA+ communities then become ‘understood’ and a ‘safe’ topic to discuss because there is an explanation for how we developed. And, it seems as if even heterosexuals can embrace their alternate binary side because they must be included in the medical and psychological discussion if they are to be the ‘normal’ against which LGBTQIA+ identity is compared.

Even more troubling is the last sentence in Giannetti’s opening page in the section on Queer Cinema. He recounts a statistic from Amnesty International that “homosexuality is illegal in thirty-eight out of fifty-four African countries” (Giannetti, 2018, p. 443) before giving several examples of extreme laws and violence inflicted upon LGBTQIA+ citizens of African countries. He ends this paragraph with an incredibly

flippant and racially charged sentence, “They don’t call it the ‘Dark Continent’ for nothing” (p. 443). If we imagine an LGBTQIA+ student of color or heterosexual international student from Africa reading this sentence, the violence this would inflict on that student is unacceptable. The ways in which this sentence also reinforces white supremacist views of Africa and continues stereotypes that have permeated United States curriculum across disciplines are also examples of the hidden curriculum that is intersectional in its infliction of harm.

One final example of Giannetti’s (2018) positioning of the LGBTQIA+ community in opposition to the normative space of heterosexuality harkens back to his wording to describe feminism’s emergence. When discussing stars of the studio era and their closeted status, Giannetti states, “Of course, this secrecy also made them easy prey to blackmail—one of the main reasons *militant gays* [emphasis added] insist on the need to acknowledge their sexuality publicly” (p. 445). Once again, the use of the term ‘militant’ indicates a radical reaction to a traditional value. Members of the LGBTQIA+ community, if they want to fight for equality or to acknowledge their sexuality publicly, are extreme in their motives according to the author. Another aspect of the hidden curriculum is fortified by Giannetti through the ‘us v. them’ battle between traditional ideologies and any idea that challenges those values. *Understanding Movies* appears to be extreme in its reinforcing of the hidden curriculum of heteronormativity. Yet when we examine the other four textbooks more closely for their representation of LGBTQIA+ voices we find often subtler, but just as harmful, examples.

As we have seen, several textbooks marginalize LGBTQIA+ filmmakers and theories through the organizational patterns and construction of knowledge established in traditional film studies curriculum. LGBTQIA+ concerns are most often positioned within their own sections of the textbooks and described through comparisons to conventional film studies. There are additional examples of marginalization that occur through the use of descriptive language when LGBTQIA+ filmmakers or films are analyzed. One such occurrence happens in a chapter on editing in *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) when the authors use Kimberly Peirce's *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) as an example for analyzing effective sound and visual editing. The authors describe a sequence from the opening of the film:

Through a short sequence of tightly framed shots we see cars dangerously passing one another on a rural highway, the exterior of a trailer park, an interior of a trailer where Teena Brandon (Hilary Swank) is getting a haircut to make *her look like a teenage boy* [emphasis added], the exterior of a skating rink, and finally the refashioned *young woman inside introducing herself to her female blind date* [emphasis added] as "Brandon." ... The foreboding mood is established by the steady rhythm of editing and the equally steady drumbeat of the sound track. There seems to be no turning back for Teena, and as a result, we sense a *conflict may arise over this young woman's identification of her gender* [emphasis added]. (Barsam & Monahan, 2016, pp. 323–324)

The authors have served to victimize Brandon Teena through an erasure of his body by splicing it up in an analysis of "tightly framed" shots as he gets ready for a date, which they make pains to point out is a "blind" date. The main issue, however, with language here is referring to the character of Brandon as "she" or "her gender" throughout the paragraph. In doing so, the authors negate the entire point of the opening sequence in

Peirce's (1999) film and a transgender student reader's entire identity. Brandon identifies as male and this opening sequence is meant to reinforce this for the viewer.

One could argue that while inappropriate language use is harmful, perhaps complete erasure is just as troubling. This is the case with *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017). Nowhere in their textbook do the authors discuss any LGBTQIA+ concerns in detail. A quick search of the index reveals no listing for the terms LGBTQIA, gender, sexuality, lesbian, gay, transgender or queer. Yet, throughout the textbook, the authors do use LGBTQIA+ filmmakers and films as examples for various topics covered. For these authors, from a formalist perspective, ideological and theoretical debates are not paramount and, therefore, not highlighted. Is this then what we need in an introductory textbook—an integration of identities that does not single out one over the other or pit one against the other? No. As I discuss in the final chapter, there is still a need to acknowledge our own identities, just in ways that are not in opposition to or violently compared against others. If a student reader does not know that the plot of a film centers upon LGBTQIA+ identities or that a filmmaker identifies as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, then integration such as occurs in *Film Art* is useless in terms of interdisciplinary study and critical analytical skills. Complete erasure, here under the guise of formalism, continues the traditional view of a heteronormative hidden curriculum. As I have discussed in other chapters, a student reader/viewer's assumptions most often lean toward white and heteronormative unless shown otherwise.



## **LGBTQIA+ Specific Language and Filmic Examples**

As the former examples point to, there are various ways in which LGBTQIA+ identities are represented (or not) within introductory film studies textbooks. Rather than continuing with varied examples from each textbook, at this point, I turn my analysis to two specific considerations: (a) the use of the term ‘homosexual’ as identifying language and (b) an examination of filmmakers and/or films used for specific critical analyses in each textbook. The first consideration opens up questions of the changing context of language use and the second, the dearth of LGBTQIA+ films and filmmakers placed in prominent positions within the analytical process.

### **‘Homosexual’ as an Identifying Term**

GLAAD, a non-governmental media watchdog organization, lists the term homosexuality as an “offensive term to avoid” in the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of its *Media Reference Guide* (2016), describing in its glossary of terms,

Because of the clinical history of the word “homosexual,” it is aggressively used by anti-LGBTQ extremists to suggest that people attracted to the same sex are somehow diseased or psychologically/emotionally disordered—notions discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Please avoid using “homosexual” except in direct quotes. Please also avoid using “homosexual” as a style variation simply to avoid repeated use of the word “gay.” The Associated Press, The New York Times and The Washington Post restrict use of the term “homosexual” (see AP, Reuters, & New York Times Style). (p. 8)

GLAAD’s Media guide expands on the offensive use of the term ‘homosexual,’ “connotations of the term are frequently used by anti-LGBTQ extremists to denigrate LGBTQ people, couples, and relationships” (p. 8). The University of California’s

Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender Resource Center (LGBT) likewise defines homosexuality as “an outdated term” (General Definitions, n.d.). The term has been on GLAAD’s list of offensive terms for over a decade, and in 2006, the organization persuaded the Associated Press to “restrict the use of the word” (Peters, 2014, para. 5). Each of the textbooks I analyzed in this project were all written well after 2006, so why do most of these textbooks continue to use the word?

As seen in the quotes from Giannetti’s (2018) textbook, the author utilizes some variation of the term ‘homosexuality’ repeatedly. The index indicates nine instances of the term throughout the book with the entire seven-page section on “Queer Cinema” included. One use of the term is a rhetorically charged sentence in a section of Giannetti’s Ideology chapter. In describing a ‘leftist’ view of sexuality, the author states, “They often accept homosexuality as a valid lifestyle” (p. 421). He continues by describing the opposing position, “Rightist regard the family as a sanctified institution” (p. 421). Even though Giannetti is attempting here to describe two sides to an ideological position, by using the modifying phrase “accept as valid” to describe LGBTQIA+ relationships and presenting the supposed oppositional side as a legitimate family, not only is the author continuing the conflict-laden rhetoric, he is also disavowing an LGBTQIA+ family structure all while using wording that is often employed in harmful ways by homophobic legislators, media personalities, and religious leaders. Not all of the instances pointed to in the index actually uses the word ‘homosexual,’ most are descriptions of films that include LGBTQIA+ themes. All of these examples, however, are centered upon films with male protagonists, yet rather than utilizing the term ‘gay,’ as the GLAAD media

resource suggests, all LGBTQIA+ references are lumped under the term ‘homosexuality’ in *Understanding Movies* (Giannetti, 2018).

*Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) lists the term ‘homosexuality’ in three instances across seven pages. Two instances listed in the index refer to a description of the career of Rock Hudson, the third on the rise of New Queer Cinema. Each of these examples utilize the terms ‘gay’ and/or ‘lesbian’ in the descriptive passages yet neither of those terms is listed in the index, instead the term ‘homosexuality’ is meant to represent all LGBTQIA+ identities. The one usage of ‘homosexuality’ in Pramaggiore and Wallis’s content occurs in a passage from the section on sexuality in film in which the authors set up a brief history of abuses faced by the LGBTQIA+ community. “For much of the twentieth century, only two sexual orientations were recognized—heterosexual (straight) and homosexual (gay or lesbian); the former was considered normal and the later deviant” (p. 323). The usage of the term here would appear to fall under GLAAD’s allowance for the term for direct quotes. Though not a direct quote, the authors are referring to a historical concept. Still, using ‘homosexuality’ as a blanket term in the index undercuts their attempts to redirect the conversation from historical marginalization.

As I discussed earlier, *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017) does not address LGBTQIA+ films or filmmakers as specific content, therefore, the term ‘homosexual’ does not appear. *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) does not use the term, instead using “LGBT cinema” as an entry in the index in reference to a brief section on present day LGBTQIA+ films. However, in a passage on the influence of *Brokeback*

*Mountain* (Lee, 2005), the authors describe the film as “featuring a homosexual relationship,” while later using the phrase “gay relationship” in the same passage (Barsam & Monahan, 2016, p. 2). Here the authors fall into writing that GLAAD (2016) cautions against by “using ‘homosexual’ as a style variation simply to avoid repeated use of the word ‘gay’” (p. 8).

The one textbook that appears to try to avoid use of the term ‘homosexual’ is *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018), employing instead modifiers such as ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ when describing LGBTQIA+ films and filmmakers. *The Kids Are All Right* (Cholodenko, 2010) is a film about “lesbian parenting,” and *Brokeback Mountain* (Lee, 2005) is the exploration of a “gay male love story” (Corrigan & White, 2018, p. 86). The index does list ‘homosexuality’ as a term but redirects the search to “lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) films.” Perhaps this is a holdover from past editions for readers not yet accustomed to searching for specific terminology. *The Film Experience* is not completely free of the use of the term ‘homosexuality’ within the main text however. A caption for a still photograph from *Brokeback Mountain* (Lee, 2005) carries the following description, “This political melodrama depicts homosexual lovers kept apart by social and generic conventions” (Corrigan & White, 2018, p. 356). To be fair to the authors, this caption may have been written by editing staff from the publishing company. This is an instance, however, that speaks to the need for careful consideration of language use across all phases of publication. *The Film Experience* also utilizes the term ‘homoeroticism,’ and while this term is not listed as offensive in GLAAD’s media resource, I would argue that the separating of same-sex eroticism from opposite-sex

eroticism by the use of the prefix 'homo' serves the same degrading, marginalizing effect as the term 'homosexuality' does.

In addition to terminology utilized by the authors of these introductory textbooks, the filmic examples employed reinforce a hidden curriculum that privileges heteronormative ideology from the perspective of western, white, patriarchy. It is beyond the scope of this project to delve into each film and filmmaker mentioned in the minutiae of each textbook. That endeavor, while important, could become unwieldy and not tell us much more than we can already assess from the project at hand. It is important, however, to consider examples used in a larger context.

### **Critical Analysis Examples**

As discussed earlier, a main focus of each textbook is to teach the student reader analytical processes in preparation to construct written essays as part of a learning outcome of the curriculum. In approaching this outcome, each textbook provides examples of partial or full analytical essays. These essays appear either in chapters with specific content about the writing process or in smaller sections within the aesthetic chapters where written analyses are used as examples of analyzing the particular convention under consideration. These analyses, therefore, are highlighted as an important learning resource for students. When we examine just these portions of the textbook, which filmmakers and films do we find used as examples? What hidden information is being imparted by the authors in their choices for closer examination?

My examination of all five textbooks found multiple films (n=72) analyzed in substantial ways. I consider substantial to mean that the films are not merely mentioned

but discussed in depth. Some analyses are several pages in length, such as *Film Art's* (Bordwell et al., 2017) sample analytical essays that make up the “Critical Analysis of Films” chapter as well as *Film's* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) “Film Analysis” and *Looking at Movies'* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) “Looking at...” sections that appear in the aesthetic chapters. *The Film Experience's* (Corrigan & White, 2018) “Film in Focus” sections are shorter in length, usually one to two pages in each chapter. Ironically, the textbook that employs the more disturbing language and marginalizing organization, *Understanding Movies* (Giannetti, 2018), also provides the most diverse examples of films for analysis. These examples are numerous throughout each chapter. However, the short paragraphs that accompany a still photograph from the filmic example are little more than captions with production data and brief connections to the details discussed in the chapter. I, therefore, did not include these in my analysis for this section; instead I used Giannetti's (2018) final chapter “Synthesis: *Citizen Kane*” as the one extended analytical example.

In the five introductory textbooks, 72 films were used for either partial or full critical analysis essays. Of the 72, fifty-four or 75% of the films analyzed were either full or partial American productions. Nine (13%) were international but also from westernized cultures. Four (.05%) were Asian productions: two from Japan, and two from Hong Kong. When analyzing for diversity of voices outside of nationality, similar patterns of western patriarchal dominance emerged. Four (.06%) films were from Black filmmakers, three male-identifying and one female-identifying. Seven (10%) films were either entirely or partially directed by filmmakers who identify as women. There were no

films from LGBTQIA+ filmmakers or narratives that center on LGBTQIA+ characters or issues.

This brief examination of the content areas where the analytical and, therefore, meaning-making process culminates provides another example of the work of the hidden curriculum in place within introductory film studies textbooks. The assumption of the standard for analysis to be filmic texts of white, westernized, male-focused narratives created by male-identifying filmmakers is reinforced by the primacy these films are given within the culminating sections of meaning-making in these textbooks. What this examination also shows is an incredible scarcity of diverse voices. Advancing this project to examine in greater detail each filmic example, both written and visual, used by the authors for intersections of diverse voices is needed. While my analysis of the textbooks examines a mostly larger view of the construction of these learning resources, a more intimate analysis could highlight in detail the dearth of intersectional voices. For example, most of the LGBTQIA+ films and filmmakers that are examined in the books are usually white and middle class, with *Brokeback Mountain* (Lee, 2005) serving as the most often used example. It is not surprising to find even in a cursory examination that Native American, Latinx, and transgender filmmakers and films are not highly represented either.

A summary of the data collected for this chapter is provided in two tables. Table 1 represents the specific data collected regarding LGBTQIA+ language and examples used as well as the sections in which the bulk of the information appears. These sections reflect an *othering* of meaning-making from LGBTQIA+ perspectives. Table 2 condenses

the information gathered for the large critical analysis examples utilized in each textbook. The table divides the analyses according to nationality, gender identification, and race/ethnicity. This table serves to highlight the lack of diversity in major analytical examples used.

The data gathered for this analysis is intricate and does not lend itself to be easily consumed when viewed from the expansive content and comparative examination presented. The amount of content covered and examples considered can be unwieldy even for me as I continually revised the narrative of what the data reveals. In order to pull the information together in a perhaps more easily digestible format, in the following chapter I propose four cartographic rules that can be gleaned from the data presented in this chapter. These rules provide another tool in advancing this project as a way to examine introductory textbooks in other disciplines and as a guide to constructing a revised curriculum that is interdisciplinary and inclusive in its approach.



**Table 1****Instances of LGBTQIA+ Language and Examples Used and the Sections in Which Those Examples Occur**

Textbook title	Section title	Direct/Indirect reference to LGBTQIA+ identities	Number of LGBTQIA+ examples used in total	Example of language use as “othering” in total (including index)
<i>Film</i>	“Topics in Ideological Criticism: Sexuality in Cinema; Gender in Cinema”	Direct	21 (7 visual)	Reference to binary – 1 “Alternative” or “Non-Normative” – 4 Opposite of “normal” – 1 “Confrontational” – 1 Mixing gender with sexuality – 1 Use of “homosexuality” – 4
<i>Film Art</i>	None	None	None	None
<i>Film Experience</i>	“Contemporary Film Theory – Theories of Gender and Sexuality”	Direct	2 (1 visual)	Opposite of “normal” – 1 Use of “homosexuality” – 1
	“Cultural Studies”	Direct		
	“Studying Film: Film Spectators and Film Culture”	Indirect		
	“Making Sense of Documentary films: Serving as a Social, Cultural, and Personal Lens”	Indirect		
<i>Looking at Movies</i>	“Production in Hollywood Today – LGBT Movies”	Direct	2 (1 visual)	Use of “homosexual” – 1 Using incorrect pronoun for transperson – 2
	“Cultural invisibility”	Indirect		
<i>Understanding Movies</i>	“Ideology – Queer Cinema”	Direct	37 (10 visual)	Reference to binary – 4 Mixing gender with sexuality – 1 “Confrontational” – 3 “Transvestite” – 1 Use of “homosexual(ity)” – 20
	“Ideology – Feminism”	Indirect		

**Table 2****Details of Major Critical Analyses Used in Each Textbook**

Textbook title	# of substantial film analyses	From U.S. or Western country	From non-U.S. or Western country	Male-identifying director	Female-identifying director	Co-Directed by male- and female-identifying directors	Director of color
<i>Film</i>	18 (one film analyzed twice)	16	1	16	1	1	0
<i>Film Art</i>	17 (one film analyzed twice)	14	2	16	0	0	1 (M)
<i>Film Experience</i>	26	24	2	22	4	0	4 (1F/3M)
<i>Looking At Movies</i>	10 (includes analysis of the work of the actress, Michele Williams)	9	1	8	0	1	0
<i>Understanding Movies</i>	1	1	0	1	0	0	0

*Notes.* The film most often substantially analyzed across the textbooks is *Citizen Kane* (Welles, 1941)

All filmmakers of color are Black filmmakers

The non-Westernized countries include: South Africa – 1; Hong Kong – 2; Japan – 2; Brazil – 1

None of the films represent LGBTQIA+ content or filmmakers

## CHAPTER V

### CARTOGRAPHIES OF KNOWLEDGE IN INTRODUCTORY FILM STUDIES CURRICULUM

Introductory film studies curriculum has relied on a traditional, canonical foundation since its beginnings in the academy 60 years ago. Even as new perspectives entered the discipline, the primacy of meaning-making as emanating from the filmmaker and filmic text continued as a thread that ran through the analytical process. This primacy is derived from an aesthetic foundation that privileges a standardized way of viewing. Any new perspective that challenges this preferred view is, for the most part, tolerated, but never integrated. In attempting to understand how this focus on agency as a privileging aspect of the filmic text and filmmaker has continued as the basis of introductory film studies curriculum, this chapter seeks to flesh out the data in Chapter IV and to join this information together with earlier discussions on identity in an attempt to answer RQ 1: How does traditional canonical film study position and address students?

After examining the five introductory film studies textbooks described in Chapter IV, I posit that four cartographic rules of knowledge construction are present throughout each textbook and, therefore, the overall curriculum of introductory film studies. This part of the analytical project informs the answer to RQ1: SQ1: Which cartographic rules of knowledge construction as related to identification practices are present within traditional film studies? The information within each of the following informs the answer

to RQ1: SQ2: What does this reveal about how identity is understood and constructed by such traditional canonical analysis?

In mapping the cartographic rules, I follow the path of Alexander and Mohanty (2010) by bringing together all the data elements from the content, comparative, and discourse analyses then distilling them into recognizable themes that point to the privileging of certain perspectives. These cartographic rules serve to sustain the marginalizing practices of introductory film studies curriculum. They establish patterns of hegemonic ideals based on canonical aesthetics and educational praxis. The rules are:

1. The process of analytical meaning-making foregrounds a majority white, heteronormative, patriarchal, Hollywood perspective.
2. A formal, canonical, aesthetic analysis is privileged.
3. The construction of knowledge is multi-disciplinary rather than interdisciplinary.
4. Any 'way of looking' that does not conform to the traditional canonical analysis is marginalized, elided, and/or degraded through language use and filmic examples.

While I delineate four rules here, there are elements of each that overlap, particularly when considering discursive patterns. For example, the observations I discuss for rule #4 also add critical information to the observations for rule #1. Similarly, organizational patterns observed for rule #2 also help show the multi-disciplinary aspects present in rule #3. The discursive patterns particularly point to how introductory film studies curriculum positions students of non-dominant identities through language and

filmic examples employed. With the understanding that there are no exact borders to these rules or patterns individually, I expand on all four in the remainder of this chapter.

The first two cartographic rules that I delineate question, at the forefront, the organizational structure of the textbooks with the filmic examples, language, and analyses used as support. For the third and fourth cartographic rules, I consider more in depth the content within the chapters, specifically focusing on LGBTQIA+ identities. If similar organizational structures are used within each of these textbooks, then discursive patterns and cartographic rules are in place that construct knowledge of introductory film studies as a homogeneous analysis that reinforces the exclusionary historical foundations of the discipline. The invisibility of classical cinema practices and early theoretical perspectives of the viewer as passive align with historical education perspectives of the hidden curriculum and the student as an empty vessel to present a curriculum mired in decades of stasis even as it claimed to be progressing.

**Rule 1: The Process of Analytical Meaning-Making Foregrounds a Mostly White, Heteronormative, Patriarchal, Hollywood Perspective**

As I discussed in Chapter I, the history of film studies within the United States begins with influences of European writers and filmmakers from early state-run film industries. Moving from a mainly technical focused curriculum to one that embraced criticism and theory, the first U.S. film studies programs were organized around ideas of what was aesthetically and narratively pleasing. Connections to Greek ideals of beauty and rhetoric as seen in visual art and literary disciplines formed a basis of analysis that continues in the current curriculum. Meaning-making, students are to understand,

emanates from the artist or art form based on a set of guidelines steeped in grand theoretical perspectives.

When film studies advanced to include the influences of psychoanalysis, philosophy, and sociology—Freud, Lacan, Gramsci, Althusser, Marx—the tradition of white, patriarchal, grand theory perspectives was absorbed into the foundation. Meaning-making was explained through forces that did not foreground the agency of the individual. Rather, we were either a societal mass or an unconscious being upon which film worked its magic. The focus was and continues to be form and content when discussing interpretive analysis. As feminist film theory and eventually critical race, queer, class, and (dis)ability theories entered discussions around the study of film, they were either ignored by traditional scholars or placed into sections outside the normal to explain alternative views.

The five textbooks I analyzed continue this foundational approach to meaning-making. A few of the textbooks, as discussed in Chapter IV, attempt to integrate these alternative views. As we have seen, however, even the more progressive texts in the end reify the status quo position tied to the Eurocentric, patriarchal, heteronormative view with Hollywood always being the standard by which the authors compare distinct national cinemas. The overall construction of knowledge in film studies is imbued with this foundation and the authors' placement of information in their individual texts highlights this construction. From the first pages of the textbooks, the authors lay out their purpose as it connects to meaning-making that appears, at first, to consider the individual. Utilizing terms like 'interpretive' to describe meaning-making would suggest

an individual connection. This purpose is never fully realized however because each textbook relies on the grand theories and curriculum influences from the beginnings of film studies to build toward an appropriate analytical meaning-making process, one that most often culminates in what the filmmaker intended or the textbook authors deem is correct.

Even with slight variations of meaning-making processes or purposes presented in each of the textbooks, the authors' placement of these sections near the beginning of the texts foregrounds a conventional construction of knowledge. By placing discussions of content, form, and film language in the most prominent sections of the textbook, the authors reinforce this importance in the mind of the reader. Constructing knowledge with form, content, and filmic language as the precursors to meaning-making places the student in a position of passive receptacle for a filmmaker's message. This organization provides students with always and already circumscribed meaning-making pathways—those that align with the foundational principles. Presenting boundaries such as these limits the relationship between film and the students' experiences, a marginalizing practice that degrades the meaning-making for many students whose experiences may not align with traditional viewing conventions particularly connected to Hollywood film.

Meaning-making as connected to an idealized version of Hollywood is just one way in which the American film industry is lauded as exceptional. Exceptionality of Hollywood practices is a theme throughout the textbooks even though the authors attempt to negate its hegemonic purposes as a mirror of U.S. culture and free-market economics.

The paradox of the American film industry as both leader and underdog permeates the use of the comparison format in these textbooks. This type of analysis is a common rhetorical device that serves to invalidate the power and privilege inherent in this traditional perspective. The invisibility of classical cinema intermingles with the hidden curriculum to position the student reader as one unified mass accepting the information without critical thought due to the prominence and familiarity of American cinema.

By promoting Hollywood as the standard bearer for all other film industries, a white, westernized, heteronormative, free-market, patriarchal perspective is privileged. As I discussed in Chapter II recounting relevant literature for this project, when race, ethnicity, and sexuality are not explicitly stated, a white, straight, ethnically European character is assumed. When the authors point to classical Hollywood and European filmmakers as examples and then analyze their work by utilizing grand theories, a patriarchal perspective is put forward as the norm. Any student who may not align with those identities is not shown ways in which they can challenge dominant processes unless an instructor deviates from the traditional curriculum. Teaching according to these views marginalizes and elides additional perspectives. Including these additional views as they are incorporated in the organization of the textbook, as alternative approaches, is not the answer. Othering feminist, queer, and critical race work by placing them in small sections of chapters where the ideas are summarized in cursory paragraphs further degrades their accomplishments and contributions to film studies. Moving away from the traditional analytical process that suppresses student agency and individuality is paramount.



Accomplishing this will take more than just re-thinking an overall view of film studies as white, heteronormative, patriarchal, and European because its use permeates all aspects of the film studies curriculum. The grounding of analysis within traditional study is evident also in introductory film studies' focus on aesthetic elements utilized to compare filmmakers, filmic texts, and genres. This aspect is revealed in cartographic rule two.

### **Rule 2: A Formal, Canonical Aesthetic Analysis is Privileged**

With a traditional curriculum tied to grand theories, art and literature disciplines, and ideals of visually pleasing aesthetics, introductory film studies predicates meaning-making on form and content. Aspects of form include choices made by the filmmaker and other creative personnel. The curriculum highlights certain aesthetic and narrative elements as predominant considerations for analysis. Each textbook highlights mise-en-scene, cinematography, sound design, production design, acting, and editing as foremost aesthetic aspects for the student to appreciate. Narrative storytelling serves as the standard by which other types of films are compared. These elements are dissected and examined according to traditional, classical, filmic language and purpose in order to present for the student a second step along the analytical path. Following this traditional, classical path leads the student to a dictated respect for films deemed canonical and filmmakers revered as auteurs. The majority of canonical films and auteur filmmakers the authors use as examples to highlight aesthetically, narratively pleasing and, therefore, correct filmic texts align with cartographic rule one: a white, heteronormative, patriarchal, western perspective. Classical aesthetics as evidenced in the film canon are

the foundation upon which introductory film studies was established and continues to operate as a way to present to the student interpretive analysis.

The authors discussion of framing, as I examined in Chapter IV, is indicative of the way that classical aesthetics is privileged within the curriculum. The student is taught that there are appropriate or determined meanings available to be mined if the student follows the correct analytical path. Whether it is the function and context of the filmmaker's choices and filmmaking conventions we understand unconsciously based on years of viewing, or the image as representational of embedded cultural values, each of these authors' methods of teaching students about framing denies the student their own true agency in meaning-making. This in turn continues the traditional lens of film analysis and appreciation that began with the first film studies courses in the 1960s when a curriculum that praised traditional ideals of filmmaking and viewer appreciation were established. This construction of knowledge in turn reinforces a hidden curriculum of a passive student/viewer and the proper ways they should experience and admire the film industry. The relationship between viewer and film is elided in order to elevate the aesthetic qualities. Privileging these aspects of film over a consideration of the individual viewer is evident in a complete lack of in depth discussions around fandom as an element in the interpretive process. In particular the aesthetic conventions of genre studies and film types would be an ideal area of the textbooks in which to discuss the fan relationship with the filmic text.

None of the four textbooks I analyzed discusses the intersection of fandom and genre or type; only two discuss fandom at all, one within a chapter on film stars (see

*Film*, Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) and the other in a section on marketing (see *The Film Experience*, Corrigan & White, 2018). A student's connection to a film genre through fandom or other individual reasons—perhaps a student has a bond with westerns due to watching these films with a grandparent when they were children, as I did—has as much, if not more, effect on the ways in which they make meaning from that genre and thus appreciate the conventions and narrative form. While we want students to understand the major ideas behind genre studies, we should not deny them the relational aspect as well that influences their meaning-making. Teaching genre studies in the traditional fashion is, frankly, easier. To categorize characteristics and teach basic iconographic elements makes for a digestible lesson that fits easily into an instructional plan that appeals to a mass of students. Asking them to read about and consider their individual identities opens up multiple ways in which we need to re-think evaluating analyses. For many instructors, this seems like a daunting task. I address these more practical applications in Chapter VI; for now, we need to consider for the example here, that only teaching genre studies through historical, industrial, or culturally constructed lenses limits our students' learning and, in many cases, can reject their personal identification with certain genres. The curriculum then reinforces a rejection of our individual relationship to films by framing the outcome of the analytical process in a traditional, five paragraph essay assignment influenced by English composition structures.

The overall purpose of introductory film studies is to synthesize aesthetic, narrative, canonical, genre, type, and auteur studies into a formal written analysis. The final paper most often assigned in survey film studies courses focuses on bringing

together all sections of the curriculum through the analytical process set forth by the construction of knowledge. It is ironic that in a field so engrossed with the visual and aural, we still rely so heavily on the traditional paper for student analysis. There is also a paradox inherent in a field of study often aligned with creative artistic endeavors that heralds the objective written form over something more progressive. It is as if our field mirrors the contradictions within the industry itself. To be fair to the authors of *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018), they do present the student with what they term a ‘learning tool,’ a short section entitled “Form in Action: Creating a Video Essay” (p. 433) that describes constructing a critical video essay. This alternative to the traditional paper does include a written section but allows for more creative visual and aural techniques to be used in an analysis. This assignment closely aligns with one I use in classes. I address this assignment and others that foster self-reflexivity in Chapter VI.

As a characteristic of film studies, this cartographic rule serves as a major reinforcement of rule one by limiting a student’s relationship to the filmic text. Through the aesthetic, narrative, and schematic aspects of traditional, canonical film studies, student identity is subordinated to Greek ideals and dominant values. What is deemed appropriate for analysis and correct for the analytical outcome is steeped in grand theories and hegemonic practices. This goal of traditional film studies curriculum is evident in the continued focus on the written, classically structured, final paper assignment. Any characteristics of film studies that might highlight the individual relationship with film, such as fandom or the use of visuals as an analytic tool, is marginalized as too subjective and not scholarly. The film studies student is forced into

certain boundaries that place them within majoritarian value systems. A major reason why the traditional, canonical curriculum continues to be prioritized is because introductory film studies constructs knowledge as multi-disciplinary rather than interdisciplinary.

**Rule 3: The Construction of Knowledge is Multi-Disciplinary Rather Than  
Interdisciplinary**

Cartographic rule three is already evident from our discussion of the first two rules. However, it is particularly apparent in the ways in which each textbook covers—or does not cover—various theoretical concepts within the field of film studies. As with any textbook, the authors privilege their scholarly work as the lenses through which they construct knowledge. This aspect of textbook authorship sets up organization a priori of any consideration of content. The priority is film studies analysis and a singularity of focus is, therefore, ingrained in the instructional approach. Because the textbooks are written by scholars mainly focused on film studies, the organization of the chapters and, thus, cognitive development is based on silos of knowledge. Even the authors whose work encompasses women, gender, and sexuality studies organize their instruction through traditional paths of analysis. Anything that challenges the traditional is either marginalized or dismissed as subjective.

Multi-disciplinarity is most evident in the presentation of information on additional theories of representation in film. If the authors include a discussion of various ways of looking that challenge the traditional, these ways are often relegated to separate sections or chapters. The majority of each textbook is devoted to the discussion of

traditional analytical processes outlined in cartographic rules one and two, hundreds of pages of analysis. Theories related to representational aspects of film, those that highlight the viewer relationship, if covered at all, are always examined in contrast to the traditional. They are not given the historical and cultural respect provided the grand theoretical perspectives. Very few scholars are highlighted or given credit for their work. The sections of the textbooks that do cover alternative views are short and cursory in coverage. The most expansive coverage is provided by the two textbooks co-authored by WGSS film scholars. However, the relegating of additional perspectives to singular subsections as part of larger chapters presents these additional ways of looking as other than and subordinate to the traditional. Even when the authors attempt to elevate these challenges to the traditional, their word choice points to discursive patterns that reinforce dominant ideologies tied to objective readings.

Besides the marginalizing of additional film studies perspectives through organization, the use of language, and descriptive passages continues a siloed approach to film studies. As I discuss with both *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018) and *Film* (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2011) the authors attempt a more in depth look at queer theory. Rather than integrating the ideas throughout, the authors section off the discussions within chapters on ideology and culture. Their attempts to define ‘queer’ as a term and as a perspective serve to implicitly reinforce the othering of these ideas first generated by the organization of information. Using terms steeped in psychoanalysis, descriptions based in non-normative comparisons, and identity as relegated to categorical

naming, the authors negate the positives that could come from including queer theory as an analytical perspective.

The integration of all scholarly work in film studies, both the canonical and the challenging perspectives, throughout the curriculum is the path forward. A true interdisciplinary approach would not be organized in a way that privileges one perspective over another. Nor would it degrade additional ways of viewing that challenge the traditional. A true interdisciplinary approach would include each on equal footing with a blending of all perspectives into an analytical process that places at the forefront, the viewer relationship to the filmic text. This would take careful consideration of organizational structure in the construction of knowledge and the use of appropriate and non-discriminating language. Truly analyzing the discursive aspects of film studies curriculum is paramount in this effort. The final cartographic rule highlights why this is vitally important.

**Rule 4: Any ‘Way of Looking’ That Does not Conform to the Traditional Canonical Analysis is Marginalized, Elided, and/or Degraded Through Language Use and Filmic Examples**

The final cartographic rule reinforces aspects of the first three rules—construction of knowledge, a traditional foundation, and a multi-disciplinary approach through the authors’ word choice, descriptive language, and examples used. What makes this rule so important to illuminate and work toward overcoming is that these words and examples are easily accessed by the student reader. These words are there, on the page. The examples are there, on the page. The first three rules take careful critical analysis in order

to find the data and make the connections. Construction of knowledge, a canonical approach, and multi-disciplinary organization are not as easily seen as words and examples are by the casual reader. The first three rules follow familiar patterns and schema, making the damage they can do invisible unless someone looks more deeply. This is true as well for examples used. Yes, the examples are there on the page, not needing any excavation. However, taking a broader look at the characteristics of the examples brings into focus how what we take as natural can actually be harmful to the marginalized identity. When confronted with multitudes of filmic examples from mostly white, male, heteronormative, western European and American filmmakers, the assumptions of white and straight are reified. It is hard to question an author's use of examples when what you have been faced with for most of your school years are other examples of white, patriarchal, heteronormative figures. Language use can also reinforce this aspect of the hidden curriculum and the invisibility of cinema for those whose identity aligns with this majority. Marginalized identities, on the other hand, might very well read a sentence with 'homosexual' in it or a description of Africa as "they don't call it the Dark Continent for nothing" (Giannetti, 2018, p. 443) and right away feel the pain of a dominant ideological perspective passing itself off as appropriate knowledge.

While all of the textbooks utilize language that is marginalizing or degrading at some point, none of them take it as far as the Giannetti (2018) text. One of the reasons I waited to discuss the data from this textbook at the end of Chapter IV rather than highlight it in the other areas as well is because my analysis found it to be so very



appalling with its use of marginalizing language and descriptive phrases that the other aspects gleaned from the data paled in comparison.

The data for this portion of the analytical project revealed that feminism and LGBTQIA+ identity in two of the textbooks, *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017) and *Understanding Movies* (Giannetti, 2018), were often discussed in dismissive ways. While *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) debases a transgender narrative. Bordwell et al. (2017) devalue a feminist reading of Ripley in *Aliens* (Cameron, 1986) and erase LGBTQIA+ identity all together by never mentioning queer theory or gender and sexuality issues. Barsam and Monahan (2016) purposefully misuse the pronoun for Brandon Teena in *Boys Don't Cry* (Peirce, 1999). Giannetti (2018) utilizes language that is condescending and racist. LGBTQIA+ persons and feminists are “militant” when they fight for equality, and residents of a city block in Brooklyn are “black ghetto dwellers.” The outright harm this inflicts on students who might identify as feminist and/or black and/or LGBTQIA+ is unacceptable from any textbook, let alone a largely utilized mass-market text.

The other less blatant use of language can be seen in four of the five textbooks. The use of the term ‘homosexual’ to describe any member of the LGBTQIA+ community occurs in every textbook except *Film Art* (Bordwell et al., 2017). Each of the other textbooks vary in their use of the term. ‘Homosexual[ity]’ occurs most often (n=20) in Giannetti’s (2018) text and the least (n=1) in *Looking at Movies* (Barsam & Monahan, 2016) and *The Film Experience* (Corrigan & White, 2018). While it appears that some authors have taken steps not to use the term that GLAAD and other activist organizations

advise against because of its connotative aspects, it appears in indexes and film still descriptions. To truly move away from marginalizing language, careful copyediting is required. Careful cross-checking that would occur in an interdisciplinary collaboration could help illuminate a mistake when connotatively harmful language is used.

Adding to the harmful effects of descriptive language choice is the use of majoritarian focused filmic examples analyzed for the culminating discussions of the meaning-making process. Each of the textbooks reinforced in their major analyses the assumption of whiteness, patriarchy, and heteronormativity within the hidden curriculum of canonical film studies. While 72 films were given significant space as examples of how students should approach the analytical process, only 15 of these films were created by filmmakers with diverse perspectives. None of the films were from the perspective of the LGBTQIA+ community. When any films that spoke to LGBTQIA+ identities, either through narrative or filmmaker perspective, were presented to the student reader, they were most often found in the sections related specifically to queer theory or a tangentially similar theoretical focus. This sectioning off of LGBTQIA+ perspectives reinforces the marginalizing we see in other societal institutions. It is a simple fix to utilize diverse voices in more prominent areas of these textbooks. We can analyze *Moonlight* (Jenkins, 2016) or *Pariah* (Rees, 2011) for director style or meaning-making or aesthetic elements without sectioning these films off as only analytical choices for LGBTQIA+ films. They can hold prominent spaces within the curriculum as culminating examples of the analytical process. Film studies has been tied to the canonical as preeminent examples for more than 60 years. Yes, *Citizen Kane* (Welles, 1941) is a transcendent film and worthy

of study and examination, but should it be the only film critically analyzed, as in Giannetti's (2018) text? Because of the marginalizing practices of the Hollywood film industry since its move to the studio system, the majority of films considered worthy of study have come from white, male, heteronormative, westernized perspectives. This has left little room for other voices. These voices are there however, both historically and contemporarily. It is imperative that an introductory film studies curriculum recognizes the contributions of films and filmmakers from diverse perspectives. Relying on specialized courses or sectioned off content areas is not sufficient for teaching introductory students that these diverse voices have been intertwined in the film industry since its inception. Continuing to marginalize contemporary LGBTQIA+ films and filmmakers by not utilizing these texts as culminating analytical examples for meaning-making serves as an element of the hidden curriculum that privileges dominant voices.

### **Considering Students as Individuals**

As a tool to teach introductory film studies, the five textbooks I examined construct knowledge through discursive patterns and cartographic rules that serve to marginalize certain student identities as they reinforce a traditional curriculum.

With the themes presented here we can see how these textbooks have positioned students from diverse backgrounds as other than the traditional, canonical meaning-making perspectives of introductory film studies curriculum. Because of the tools utilized by introductory film studies textbooks to construct knowledge, students from marginalized identities must negotiate their meaning-making through disidentificatory (Muñoz, 1999) processes. For LGBTQIA+ students, disidentification is their path to

agency within the analytical process. At the intersection of the minority student's negotiation and the marginalizing canonical curriculum is where we can see Muñoz's (1999) 'jolt' to the social order (p. 6) occur. This intersection is where we need to focus as we move forward to truly open up introductory film studies curriculum for the inclusion of diverse voices. At this point of negotiation is where the minority student perspective can help illuminate the monothematic foundation of introductory film studies and work to deconstruct marginalizing practices. Re-writing the dominant fiction of canonical film studies begins with the recognition of the work that minority students engage in when learning about meaning-making and filmic texts.

Not only must we confront the moment of negotiation in disidentificatory practice, we must also be cognizant of revising the curriculum based solely on an understanding of identity as intersectional. It is important to recognize and integrate scholarly work that advances identity formation into the realm of assemblage theories. Addressing students as fixed entities of identities that are always and already categorized loses sight of the fact that they are varied beings in different contexts. We have to approach changes to the aforementioned themes with the understanding that student identity (and our identities) are always in a state of becoming, a future-oriented body mobilized by time, space, sonic vibrations, and affective processes (Puar, 2007; Weheliye, 2014). Changes we make to the curriculum are more productive if moved to meaning-making processes that provide students choices and allow for more agency in their learning, processes that move beyond a set understanding of student identity. The first step in this process is recognizing that the filmmaker and filmic text are not the sole

forces in meaning-making. Second, because this is the case, there is not an appropriate meaning to be found. If we are to revise the curriculum to include more diverse perspectives by foregrounding identities as assemblages of movement then a foundational approach of relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002) is the path forward. Working toward a curriculum that focuses on the moment of encounter between viewer and filmic text can allow for diverse perspectives and varied meanings to be interrogated. Students can find their own meanings as individuals rather than learn that they must adhere to a meaning constructed from a mass understanding. Even small changes that reconsider organization, language, and major examples used can move the curriculum toward a relational aesthetic approach.

Re-vamping an entire discipline is rather difficult and beyond what I can accomplish in this project. My hope is that suggestions I make in Chapter VI will move us more toward an interdisciplinary, relational aesthetic approach that integrates all voices from the very first words of an introductory film studies curriculum while holding onto some of the very necessary aspects of a traditional approach. In Chapter VI, I suggest a curriculum strategy that presents an understanding of form, practices, and terminology but also argues for meaning-making that additionally allows for an interpretation that may very well not align with one of the acceptable meanings that the textbook authors insist can be found within a traditional (read: correct) form of film analysis.

## CHAPTER VI

### TOWARD A RELATIONAL AESTHETICS OF FILM STUDIES CURRICULUM

As is the case in many other academic disciplines, film studies is grounded in traditional ways of instruction established from its inception. When the discipline did begin to acknowledge other ways of looking and other approaches to analysis, it did so in ways that continued to elide the new voices. Film studies proceeded down the easier path of a multi-disciplinary approach rather than integrating all perspectives in a more inclusive, interdisciplinary curriculum. This project has attempted to reveal the ways in which a traditional, canonical film studies curriculum builds particular student knowledge through organization of information, language use, filmic examples, and a multidisciplinary approach. These curriculum elements, rather than advancing the diversity of voices in film studies, continues their marginalization.

How can we move film studies forward to consider a truly diverse student learner whose own meaning-making abilities are foregrounded, perhaps even commended? First, we must acknowledge the shortcomings of the traditional curriculum and the harm it has inflicted on certain student identities. Second, we must hold as equally valid as traditional analysis those perspectives that have been marginalized for the past 60 plus years. Finally, we must look toward a new curriculum that is truly interdisciplinary and values the diverse student experience. The motivation that drove me to take on this project was a realization that for years as a student I had been looking for someone like me within the

canon of film studies. I could find many white filmmakers, but not many females and even fewer LGBTQIA+ filmmakers. Stumbling across a lesbian filmmaker prominent in early film history whom I had never been introduced to by professors or textbook authors brought about an anger and sadness that eventually turned into a persistent quest to interrogate my own praxis. This then led me to analyze introductory film studies textbooks and the ways in which they construct student knowledge. The next part of this quest is a proposition for a new way of teaching film studies that does not discard the relevant aspects of the traditional canon.

### **Considering a New Curriculum**

As evident from the discussion in Chapter IV, LGBTQIA+ student and other minority student voices are elided in introductory film studies textbooks through language and filmic examples used, author biases, and traditional analytical processes. While disidentification can act as one path to meaning-making for marginalized voices, it is not a fair and inclusive journey. As instructors, when we follow a traditional curriculum with a majority of canonical examples, we are placing an extra burden on certain groups of students by asking them to re-work the given filmic example in order to find representation that conforms to their identification with the text. If instead we begin from a place of individual relationship with a filmic text as essential to the meaning-making process, then we can move toward a more inclusive and relevant curriculum. This new curriculum relies on activities, readings, language, and examples chosen through the perspective of relational aesthetics and identity studies.

Relational aesthetics and identity studies allow instructors to utilize the classical analytical process of film critique without discarding it completely. Meaning-making becomes about the individual and their relationship to the text at that time and place rather than a ‘correct’ answer that conforms to some past canonical notion. The work of Bourriaud (2002), Weheliye (2014), and Puar (2007) together provide guidance in developing a curriculum that can be flexible yet still connected to classical analytical tools.

Bourriaud’s (2002) concept of relational aesthetics locates meaning-making at the moment of connection between the art and viewer. Art does not become art, it is not complete, it does not have meaning until it comes into relationship with the individual encounter. Because meaning is made in this way, individually and contextually specific, any idea of the mass audience is rendered moot as part of the aesthetic evaluation of art. As I discussed in Chapter II, Bourriaud labels the mass audience as a fascist conceptualization through which dominant ideas of aesthetic pleasure are given preeminent status. The concept of the mass audience permeated media studies from its inception. It was not until radio and television entered our lives that theorists started to consider more individualized connections to content and form. Film studies, however, has clung to the idea of a mass audience even when faced with new scholarship and technological advances that highlight what has become a very fragmented audience. Much like the postmodern concept of the fractured subject, the film audience and film students no longer represent a unified group of viewers. Actually, they never did. We have just failed to acknowledge this revelation and adapt our methods of instruction.



Weheliye (2014), and Puar (2007) add nuance to Bourriaud's (2002) description of meaning-making by providing a re-consideration of intersectionality as the basis for discussing identity. In advancing the discussion of intersectionality beyond its additive or schema-based descriptives, Puar and Weheliye open up the possibilities of meaning-making encounters with filmic texts. When considering identity as an assemblage of contextual relations, the encounter with an art form must be understood as occurring in a specific moment through the perspective of a specific individual existing in a specific time, space, and affective state. This individual perspective is also bound up in the visual of the flesh and other outward representations of difference as "racialized assemblages" that position the viewer as a particular "genre of the human" (Weheliye, 2014, p. 2). Relationship to the filmic text is tied to the ways in which dominant ideologies hail the viewer as central to or on the boundaries of culture. As a mirror to society, films reinforce these majoritarian views or in some instances challenge those views. In either case, the viewer's relationship to cultural hierarchies influences their relationship to the filmic text. Taken together, contextual characteristics and human genres open up the ways we think of the student and their interactions with film analysis. Putting Puar's (2007) call for "an epistemology of ontology and affect" (p. 207) into practice, film studies curriculum can advance the static canonical tradition by opening up spaces for discussion of student identity at the forefront of the analytical process. In this way we will see that our students are future-oriented bodies whose relationship to any filmic text will change, perhaps even day to day. Traditional film studies places the student in a space of the past where meaning is made only through others' eyes. Film studies based in relational aesthetics

and assemblages of identity understands that the student is a being always in a state of becoming. This recognition of continual forward movement changes the ways in which traditional views of the meaning-making process are understood.

If meaning-making begins at the intersection of the viewer's initial encounter with an art form, then that moment and each moment after cannot be described as stable. Each moment of the encounter varies by the effect of time progression, emotional connection, and, in some instances, spatial relationships. When we watch a 'favorite' film from our childhood as adults, the relationship has changed. We now view the film through a perspective clouded by our histories (i.e., time progression), our identity development (i.e., emotional connection), and advances in technological distribution (i.e., spatial relations). Each of these aspects highlight the contextual nature of the encounter with a film. I still enjoy the film *Beaches* (Marshall, 1988), but my connection to it has changed as I view it now in my 50s. In 1988 I was immersed in sorority life at my undergraduate institution. The story of two women whose decades long friendship moves through many ups and downs culminating in one dying from heart disease at a relatively young age, resonated for me at the time in a completely different way than it does now. Then, I was embracing the excitement of a future filled with shared moments with these many female friends who watched the film with me. Today, I watch with my spouse and grieve for the friends I have lost through separation and untimely death. I also view the film now from the perspective of a filmmaker and scholar. I continue to analyze the film through traditional aesthetic aspects such as Gary Marshall's directing style and the performances of the lead actors, Bette Midler and Barbara Hershey, but my relationship to the film and

even these aspects of it have changed. I now understand the machinations going on behind the scenes. I now understand the connection this film has to a particular time in history and its continued relevance to young female viewers. I also worked with Hershey during my years in the film industry, and this working relationship has changed the connection I feel to the film. All of the changes point to the contextual nature of the viewing experience. There can never be one, stable, correct analysis of this film, not by individual viewers or by the same viewer watching multiple times at multiple points in their history.

Because there will always be multiple interpretations across multiple timespans and within multiple spaces, the idea of a traditional, canonical way of analyzing film needs to be revised. Blending the traditional with the contemporary project of diversity requires the incorporation of readings, activities, assessments, language use, and filmic examples that represent all voices; an interdisciplinary approach that challenges classic construction of knowledge and analysis. This new curriculum begins, not with an investigation of film form and content or defining the language of film, but with reflexive practices that reveal for the student the mechanisms of identity formation.

### **Putting it all Together**

Over the last few years, I have been incorporating small changes based on a foundation of relational aesthetics and identity studies into all the media studies courses I teach. These courses range from various media studies classes that focus more upon theoretical and case study analyses to production classes in video and podcasting. In each course I have incorporated activities, readings, and language that move students toward

analyses and productions that consider our relationship to media as an equal partner to aesthetic elements. I have faced some resistance and some acceptance.

The following discussion of a course-based curriculum that foregrounds student identity and relationship to media is, by design, general in nature at the beginning, then more focused on film studies in particular as I move through this section. I have organized it this way so as to show that this curriculum can be adapted to any media studies course. I pull from several years of instruction and several different media studies courses to propose a new way of looking at film analysis at the introductory level. Some of the ideas presented here are still in the development phase and have yet to be employed in the classroom, as I wait for the next time a course is offered.

In his book, *Why They Can't Write: Killing the Five-Paragraph Essay and Other Necessities*, John Warner (2018) argues, "Much of the writing students are asked to do in school is not writing so much as an *imitation of writing*" (p. 5). This argument could be made as well about critical film analysis; we are asking students to imitate an analytical process that has been handed down for the last 60 years. The students are not learning to think critically, they are learning to be parrots. My experience has been that students mostly focus on finding the 'correct' analysis (read: answer) for a prompt. They want to know what I think the message is behind a filmmaker's choice before they even begin to formulate their own meaning. Warner (2018) argues that a student's need to know the 'correct' answer stems from years of educational initiatives that rely on end-of-grade assessments in which conformity is the end goal. Assessments, like the five-paragraph essay, are "a shortcut, a compromise enacted so we can efficiently compare students to

each other as we drive them toward proficiency or competency” (p. 29). So too is the traditional final film analysis paper given at the end of the semester. Acting as the overall assessment of the information presented in the course, this analytical writing includes particular jargon, citations, and content requirements. Each of the textbooks examined for this project include some form of this traditional assessment as an example of comprehensive proficiency. None include a true discussion about student identity and relationship to the artifact. Even the texts that claim to relate meaning-making and student experience in the end acquiesce to a traditional idea of one or two meanings as the only valid experiences. We ask the students to imitate what others have argued is the correct meaning of a film.

It is not overly surprising then that I have faced resistance when asking students to formulate their own meaning, to think of themselves as agents in their own learning. After years of being taught that ‘I’ is a dirty word in writing, it is uncomfortable for students to present their own subjective interpretations in any form. This is where I usually begin in a course, by presenting a path where ‘I’ is accepted and encouraged. Where we ask the question, “What does my relationship to media say about me as well as the text under analysis?” This opens up space for the student to realize that they are the one in charge of their experience, to foster in them what Warner (2018) argues are “two of the most important traits for students to develop to succeed at education...agency and resilience” (p. 49). When I ask students to consider their personal relationship to a filmic text, they develop agency. When I remind them that their meaning-making is not about finding a correct interpretation but about supporting their argument through specific

examples and connections to aesthetic and/or production elements, they develop resilience as they work through drafts or video edits that best present their thesis. Working with students to feel comfortable accepting ‘I,’ both as a word choice and as a part of the meaning-making process, usually encompasses readings and activities during the first couple of weeks of the semester.

During the first three weeks of the course I challenge students to delve into questions about their relationship to media texts through readings that focus on identity and Nicholas Bourriaud’s (2002) term ‘relational aesthetics’ used to describe “the tendency to make art based on, or inspired by, human relations and their social context” (Tate, n.d., para. 1). In the first semester that I taught a course centered on the intersection of cultural studies and media studies I assigned the original source readings for this section. This was a 300-level course that was cross-listed as a diversity intensive and a women, gender, and sexuality studies course. I thought the students could handle reading Bourriaud (2002), Muñoz (1999) Weheliye (2014), and Puar (2007). Instead I made the classic mistake of a doctoral student, assigning my own class readings for my students. I did warn them that the readings were challenging, and I only expected them to read and attempt to summarize what they thought the authors were arguing. As one might expect, it did not go over well. I heard complaints about headache-inducing sentences and complicated jargon and several exacerbated protests of “These readings are too long!”

Two readings that did work well were the ones chosen for intersectionality. These readings were more accessible to the students through their organization and language. Guidroz and Berger’s (2009) “A Conversation with the Founding Scholars of

Intersectionality: Kimberlé Crenshaw, Nira Yuval-Davis, and Michelle Fine” presents an interview format article that allows students to ‘hear’ the voices of these three scholars as they discuss their work. Jennifer Nash’s (2008) “re-thinking intersectionality” then presents an article that challenges some of the tenets of intersectionality in easily digestible organization and language.

If I see a high level of push back on the more complicated articles at the 300 level, then I know that they are not appropriate for a 100-level course. I have learned that I need to meet students where they are in some instances. Yes, challenge them, but not overwhelm them. Therefore, I have been looking for alternative ways to engage with the material. In place of the other readings on relational aesthetics, disidentification, and assemblages, I utilize online resources such as summaries, examples, and interviews with the scholars, video presentations, and documentaries. I then supplement these resources with my own summaries and salient points that relate to our understanding of individual relationships to media.

Activities for this first section on identity include in-class and out-of-class assignments that open up avenues of discussion and reflection on individual identity. Some of these activities include completing a social identity wheel, drawing Venn diagrams, and written, photographic, or video assignments that relate to media artifacts. I spent some time looking for a form of the overused ‘diversity wheel’ that rather than just re-enforcing an intersectional approach to identity instead bridged the gap between intersectionality and assemblages of identity. I found one from the University of Michigan Inclusive Teaching Initiative that beyond just asking students which slices of

the wheel they fall into, they are instead asked to consider which elements of their identity they think most about, which they think least about, which they still have questions about, and what effects certain elements have on perceptions about them (both their own and others'). In the past, I have only asked students to complete this activity once. What seems obvious in retrospect is that they complete it and then forget about it because I do not remind them throughout the course of its relevance. I now plan to ask students to complete the social identity wheel again two or three times throughout the semester then reflect on any changes in their answers. We will connect our responses to contextual aspects of our identity as reflected in our discussions of assemblages.

An additional related type of activity is one in which I ask the students to draw a multi-layer Venn diagram that is representative of their co-cultures. I ask them to draw the various circles large or small based on each co-cultures' respective influence on their identity. As with the social identity wheel, I was not following up on this activity. Now, at certain points during the semester, I plan to ask the students to pull out their Venn diagrams and revise them based on their experiences at that moment. I will ask for these revisions around certain times of the semester during or near milestone events (e.g., major, mid-term, or final assignments, holiday breaks, changes in seasons, major news or cultural events). The students then will reflect on any changes in their diagrams, again considering Weheliye's (2014), and Puar's (2007) identity as assemblages of meaning.

As with all self-reflexive exercises that I ask students to complete, they are free to present these in any mode they wish. I encourage all types of written form (e.g., essay, narrative, poetry), visual form (e.g., drawing, painting, photographic or video



compilations) or audio form (e.g., podcasts, narrative or poetic recordings). While I have considered pushing students to move beyond the purely written form to requiring visual or audio forms only, I am at this point resistant to doing so for these activities. I find that undergraduate students are often hesitant to open up to self-reflexive exercises because most have been conditioned against the use of self in scholarly assignments. Instead of pushing them at this point, the purpose of these small, in-class activities is to move students toward a comfortable space of utilizing ‘I’ and subjective analysis with supporting evidence.

Before completing their first introductory media analysis assignments, students will engage with other examples of subjective analysis of media. These examples are usually in the form of journalistic or cultural critic analyses first, then academic criticisms as we move forward. I utilize podcasts (I am particularly fond of *Still Processing* from The New York Times), diversity focused media websites (*The Grio*, *The Undefeated*, *Code-Switch*, *Transilient*), diversity focused news sites (*The Cherokee Phoenix*, *Hoy*, *NBC Out*), NPR interviews, articles from established media critics, and video essays.

Academic criticisms are chosen for their accessibility to a more generalized audience of undergraduates. I try in some instances to use articles that speak to each other. As an example, in my cultural studies and media course we read Mulvey’s (1975) “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” Though not as accessible to a generalized audience as I would like, it does serve as an important primer to its responses, which are more accessible. Mulvey’s (1981) own response, “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ inspired by King Vidor’s *Duel in the Sun* (1946)” shows students that

analyses can be re-thought and revised over time by the author. We then read bell hooks's (1992) response to Mulvey, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectatorship," as an example of a critique that considers facets of identity as vital to any understanding of our relationship to a filmic text. As with the texts on identity, Mulvey's and hooks's articles are not conducive to a first-year introductory film course. In these instances, I again utilize interviews, video examples, and my own summaries.

In all of my media classes, the first assignment is a self-reflective piece that asks students to discuss their relationship to a media text that connects in some way to their histories. In my television studies course, we read an article from Emily Nussbaum, Pulitzer prize winning television critic from *The New Yorker*. Nussbaum's (2019) piece, "The Big Picture: How Buffy the Vampire Slayer Turned Me Into a TV Critic," appears in an anthology of her work, *I Like to Watch: Arguing My Way Through the TV Revolution*, a compilation of critiques that serve as examples for students of the connection between criticism, identity, and culture. After completing the section on identity, reading Nussbaum's article, and watching the particular episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon, 1997) that Nussbaum highlights as the episode that connected her to Buffy, students complete a discussion forum post (again in any form they wish) entitled "Who's Your Buffy?" In the post I ask students to reflect on a television series/character that resonated with them as Buffy does for Nussbaum, either as a positive memory or an artifact they rejected for some reason. If by chance students did not watch much television growing up (I often have a couple of students with this experience) then I ask them to reflect on a literary or film narrative/character. Each student then

reads/watches/listens to and responds to two other classmates. In this small activity, students begin to think about the ways in which their histories and identity affect their relationship with a media text. They begin the first steps of critical analysis that consider the 'I' as integral to the analytical process. In each course, I give some form of this assignment in the first two weeks. For film courses, a filmic text is the center of the prompt, for the cultural studies and media course, any media text can be discussed. I too complete the assignment presenting my own 'Buffy' and responding to each student's post. At the beginning of our next class meeting, we spend some time debriefing and remarking on our varied experiences. Discussing their own relationships to media, reading about fellow classmates' relationships, and listening to me discuss my experiences opens up a space in our classroom where identity becomes central to our course moving forward.

After these first three weeks, during which we explore identity as an assemblage of contextual relations and the relational aesthetic aspects of media texts, we spend the next seven to eight weeks on the specific subject matter that is the focus of the course. The following example will be particular to an Introduction to Film Studies course with some anecdotal asides from my television and cultural studies courses. As a preface, these weeks are where I find the most difficulty in moving from multi-disciplinary to interdisciplinary. I have found that 'choice' is a word and practice that is the guiding force during these weeks.

In my early years of teaching, I gave students no choice in films to watch or articles or chapters to read. Over the last several years I have integrated more flexibility.

This flexibility is driven by two main forces. First, my time as a student in cultural studies and feminist theory. These disciplines reinforced an already simmering idea that each of us makes meaning in our own ways. Second, the development of technologies that have changed the shared experience of moviegoing. Contemporary students are no longer only watching films in theaters. Laptops, phones, tablets, and on-demand/streaming services have quickly advanced the changes in viewing that began with the invention of the VCR home system. As I forced students to watch one film together as a class and then discuss it based on the one chapter we read for the week, the lack of engagement grew each semester. Even when I updated the course to include more contemporary filmic examples, I could see the squirming in seats increase. Based on student feedback and my own observations, I began to understand that this activity was no longer how students engaged with filmic texts. Yes, they still watch films in a theater in some instances, but that experience has changed as well. They are used to snacks, drinks, whispering to friends, multi-tasking on their phones—all things that were forbidden in our on campus screenings. The shared experience of watching a film in a local theater or on an electronic device with friends was completely different than the atmosphere I set up by denying certain choices. While some may see this move as reinforcing multi-tasking in a younger demographic that has been stereotyped as suffering from a lack of focus, I instead view this as an attempt to put assemblage theory to work. If we are to build a curriculum based on identity as assemblage, this means that some processes need to adapt to be more fluid in time and space contexts. Giving students more choices of films to view, when, and how to view them allows for the

important contextual elements of the viewing process to be considered in the meaning-making process. This does not mean that I allow students to passively view the film. We carefully discuss how and why to take notes, the need for multiple viewings, and formulating precise questions to ask about the film prior to viewing. These notes or viewing journals are turned in along with their projects. As an ‘old-school’ viewer of film, for whom the shared experience of watching with others in a reverential setting was familiar and preferred, changing this aspect of the course to reflect more of the students’ experience was my most difficult decision. I encourage students to watch with friends and family in order to replicate the shared experience of film viewing, but I do not make it mandatory. We do watch scenes from the films in class together as one way to reinforce the aspect of the shared experience. After six years of teaching the course as I had been taught to teach it, this was the first major change I made in the curriculum.

I began the change by taking advantage of a recent technological advancement in text book publishing—the ability to create your own textbook by pulling together chapters from several textbooks within a publisher’s portfolio. Mixing chapters that spoke to my desire for a more inclusive curriculum moved the course forward in a small way. The problem, of course, was that I was bound to only textbooks offered from that publisher and this ‘cherry-picking’ design still conformed to the cartographies of knowledge revealed in this study, particularly the canonical focus and the multi-disciplinary organization. To mitigate in some small way these issues, I not only moved the screening experience to an out-of-class assignment, but also gave the students, on many occasions, multiple viewing choices for each week’s topic. Again, I encouraged the

students to watch their chosen film with a group of classmates or at least family and friends. As for the film choices, I purposefully pulled together several films that presented a range of representations, allowing the students to choose whichever film spoke to them in the time and space in which they viewed it. As an example, here is the list of films students could choose from during a week where we discussed ‘gender and masculinity:’

- *Moonlight* (Jenkins, 2016)
- *Rebel Without A Cause* (Ray, 1955)
- *Lion* (Davis, 2016)
- *Far From Heaven* (Haynes, 2002)
- *Boys Don't Cry* (Peirce, 1999)

In another attempt to replicate the shared experience of moviegoing, each student would complete a discussion forum prompt prior to our next class meeting. The prompt was generalized enough to cover any of the films they chose to watch. Here is the prompt given for the week we discussed the topic of feminism in film:

The films provided as choices this week cover examples of alternatives to the dominant feminine gender characteristics as portrayed in cinema. Analyze your chosen film as to how its narrative and characters might be read as a threat to the normative family or patriarchal ideal of American society. Discuss how the director's style represents a feminist filmmaker's perspective both from formal and social contexts

Each student would then responded to two other classmates’ posts. On many occasions, responses would include a comment about a desire to view the film their classmate had written about if it was different from their chosen film. This led to each student in the

course making their own personal ‘to view’ list throughout the semester. This small change in my course opened up a new world of filmic texts for the students, a world I had closed off in the past by only giving them one film to view.

I feel that the structure of a textbook is appropriate for first-year students as we help transition them from the high-school classroom to a more self-sufficient environment. In my upper-level cultural studies course, I use an edited text as a guide. Each week in that course I give students between four and eight possible articles to choose from and usually ask them to read three to five texts. Each is relatively short, easily digestible, and due to the content of the course, applicable across our interdisciplinary discussions. As evident in my analysis, there are no textbooks for an introductory to film studies course that lend themselves to the choices I give the cultural studies students. Instead, I have made two changes in the reading assignments for introductory to film studies that are again a small step toward a more interdisciplinary curriculum. First, I do not follow the chronological order of the textbook chapters. Most often, I cover theoretical and history sections first before moving to the aesthetic chapters. Second, I supplement readings with other articles and multi-media sources, both scholarly and popular, that bring additional voices to the conversation. I find that discussing theory and history first informs every other topic we cover during the semester. This structure allows for a foundational film studies knowledge for the student that can be supported and challenged as we examine the intersections of media and culture. In this way, the aesthetic weeks in the film course are not solely about a director’s aesthetic choices. Rather, these choices are seen in a larger discussion of how

they tell cultural stories and act as a mirror to society. As an example, for the week where we discussed “Documentary Film Aesthetics” the chapter reading was supplemented by an article and podcast from *The Director’s Guild of America Quarterly*, a trade journal from the guild that represents film, television, commercial and video directors. As an acknowledgment of my standpoint, I am a member of the DGA and thus partial to their resources. The article, “Beneath the Surface: Activist Documentaries” (Stambler, 2009), highlights for students the ways in which documentaries can uncover social injustices and work toward changes in cultural attitudes and public policy. The film choices for students that week have been:

- *Waltz With Bashir* (Folman, 2008)
- *High School* (Wiseman, 1968)
- *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (Minh-ha, 1989)
- *Silverlake Life* (Joslin & Friedman, 1993)

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of giving the students these choices to view is actually the narrowing down of 3-5 choices and then making sure that the choices are accessible to the student either through a DVD copy in the library or through a streaming service. The first time I implemented this change I found it astounding that I had for years only made one choice for our screenings. There are so many other possibilities that I ignored because it was easier to stick with what was familiar to me.

As I continue to reconsider media texts used in all of my courses, I rely on the guidance of several social justice organizations and educational advocacy groups. These organizations present examples of media texts that represent marginalized voices in



positive ways. In particular for LGBTQIA+ student identities, organizations such as GLAAD (formerly “Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation”) and Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPoC) provide lists of media texts that cover a range of narratives, characters, and topics. Advocates for social justice education in K-12 schools, Rethinking Schools and Teaching for Change, provide curricular resources that can be adapted for undergraduate students. A resource available on the Teaching for Change website, *FAIR Education Act: LGBTQ-Inclusive Lessons and Activities* from the GSA network (Teaching for Change, n.d.) includes a list of documentaries and narrative films centered on LGBTQIA+ experiences.

The final three weeks of the course attempt to synthesize what we have examined throughout the semester in a critical analysis project that, unfortunately, still resembles Warner’s (2018) five paragraph essay and the format of the analyses presented by the authors of the textbooks examined in Chapter IV. The main reason for this is that I have not taught the Introduction to Film course in several semesters and have not implemented desired changes in those analytical projects. I have, however, made some strides toward varying assignments that assess student learning without just relying on the traditional written analysis in my other media courses. I am still bound to outcomes for departmental and general education courses, therefore, a written portion is always required. The two largest assignments fall at the traditional mid-term and final exam sections of the semester. The students are encouraged to use the mid-term project as a first step in the research and analysis for their final project. I have experimented with the mid-term project to move it from the specific realm of writing, opening up avenues for visual and

aural ideas as well. Here is an example of the mid-term project for my cultural studies course, “Photo/Video Compilation.”

In this assignment you will explore the visual representation of inequality as perpetuated by media or as challenged by marginalized identities through alternative media formats. As consumers of media we can often fail to critically analyze the use of photographs or video within the context of the story or narrative. In considering visual representations of class, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and/or (dis)ability comparing and contrasting the ways visuals are used across various media outlets can enlighten us to the ways inequality is embedded in our everyday consumption of media and therefore how these representations reinforce dominant ideologies. We can also use these analytical skills to enlighten us as to how some media makers challenge these inequalities. The photograph or video compilation will have an accompanying written document that places the visuals in context. This written document can take several forms—traditional essay, poetry, journaling, narrative, or a combination of one or more of these forms. The written portion should be 3-5 pages in length. If you choose to examine still photographs, the minimum number required is 10 photographs and if applicable, should be shown in the original format (color or B&W). If you put together a video compilation, it should be between 3-5 minutes. References to our readings and/or class discussions need to be included within the written portion.

I have not, unfortunately, experimented with the final critical analyses. Those assignments are still relatively traditional formats, often with oral presentations as part of the process. I have added self-reflexive sections at the end of each paper, asking the students to reflect on the process of completing the assignment. I also, as mentioned earlier, encourage the students to embrace a subjective writing standpoint that uses what they have learned in the semester as support for their argument. I present a wide range of choice for student topics. However, this assessment still remains very traditional and, in some ways, marginalizing to certain learning styles. Reconsidering this assignment is part of the next phase in this continual process of curriculum advancement.

Included in this next phase is the consideration of language use that I employ in the course materials. In education, we have seen changes in the use of marginalizing terms for race, ethnicity, religion, and in some respects, gender. However, as evident in Chapter V, certain marginalizing and/or traumatic terms that have been used to describe the LGBTQIA+ community are still very much in use in educational settings. I can attempt to find textbooks and readings that limit the use of these terms, but as also evident in the analysis of the five textbooks considered for this project, the terms are used in several different ways across each text. What I can control is the revision of any syllabus, assignment, or course policy language that might be traumatic for LGBTQIA+ students. I can look to GLAAD and the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) suggestions on terms to avoid or use. I can discuss with my students when these terms appear in textbooks, popular readings, and media texts used in the course, opening up spaces for challenging dominant ideologies. Where I continue to struggle, and I would argue all of education struggles, is with the use of binary pronouns when describing generic persons. I do not know the answer to this yet, but it is imperative that we recognize that these binary categories continue to deny gender non-conforming student experiences. For now, I avoid the use of any pronouns in my course materials unless they refer to a filmmaker who has publicly used the pronoun to describe themselves.

These small changes—recognition of the variations in identity practices, more choice, varied examples, readings that challenge hegemonic voices—are only a start at combating the continual marginalization of certain student identities in canonical film

studies. We can do this on the individual level when given the time and resources to innovate. As evident in the narrative of my course revisions, there is still a long way to go to fully integrate all voices into our curriculum. What can be done to counteract the traditional curriculum presented in the common textbooks that rule the market? How can we build a truly interdisciplinary curriculum that includes all voices equally and gives students choice and, therefore, agency in their learning? The answer is not in a static, mass-market textbook.

By the very nature of the process of textbook creation and publication, the books are close to obsolete by the time they make it into the hands of the students. In the ever-changing world of media and the technology that drives the industry, relying on the oldest form of mass media for our curriculum organization is no longer a wise move. What is needed is an interactive, online site that responds to student choices and rapid cultural and technological changes. This online space is not the same as ancillary resources available with mass-market textbooks. Instead it is a community space that is in constant dialogue about the intersections of film and cultural representation. The technology required is nowhere near my specialty, but I envision the following elements in this resource:

- An editing/author team that includes scholars from, at the minimum, education, history, sociology, media studies, economics, philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, business, and political science.
- Guest writer/editors from other disciplines who periodically give their perspectives on topics.

- Guest writers/editors from the professional film world.
- Guest writers/editors from social justice organizations.
- Readings, videos, and audio sources from many authors, both scholarly and popular, that offer interdisciplinary views on meaning-making in film.
- Various pathways from which students can choose to read/see filmic examples that cover the same topic. E.g., a cinematography section that presents three or four examples with particular readings, video, and audio pieces relevant to that example.
- An organizational pattern that is not set as a one way or chronological progression. Instructors can choose a path for the course or leave the progression up to the student.
- Filmic examples that are cognizant of the need to meld canonical analysis with more contemporary scholarship.
- Language use that does not marginalize.
- Assignments that are interactive and allow for students to choose how they complete the assignment. E.g., written, video compilations, or podcast episode.
- A timely responsiveness to pertinent cultural changes. E.g., a section on those filmmakers implicated in the #metoo movement.
- The ability for students to give feedback on the site and to be part of the community learning space and interactive in its construction.
- A low-cost fee and scholarships that cover students who are in financial need.

Perhaps this is a wish list that many would find daunting or impossible. And, reading over it again, I can see that perspective. However, I have experienced hundreds of people brought together to make a film or TV series. Organization and collaboration are not difficult to achieve. The economic aspect will always be an issue in education but that should not stop us. There are grants and funding streams that are open to innovative, digital pedagogical tools. As always, these kinds of innovative (some might say ‘radical’) changes require time, resources, and motivation. The motivation should never be an issue. Why would we not do everything we can to build the most inclusive curriculum?

If marginalized students are presented information in traditional film studies curriculum that serves to continually silence their voices, then it is time to change. As this project has shown, LGBTQIA+ students are presented with a curriculum in introductory film studies textbooks that construct knowledge in ways that elide their experiences. To meet the outcomes of these courses, LGBTQIA+ students perform disidentification as a pathway to their own agency when not presented with choices that represent their experiences. Meaning-making in film is predicated on the interaction of viewer and filmic text, a relational aesthetic that foregrounds the identity of the viewer. This identity is not fixed and stable, instead it is an identity that is contextually assembled with each passing moment and experience. If meaning-making in film is reliant on the interaction of text and an ever-changing viewer identity, then we cannot teach film studies as we always have. It is no longer acceptable to rely solely on the multi-disciplinary, traditional, canonical approach. Film studies has remained relatively stagnant as culture and technology have changed. It is time to move forward.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. (2005). *The cultural politics of emotion*. Routledge.
- Alarcòn, N. (1991). The theoretical subject(s) of “This Bridge Called My Back” and Anglo-American feminism. In H. Calderon & J. D. Saldivar (Eds.), *Criticism in the borderlands: Studies in Chicano literature, culture, and ideology* (pp. 140–153). Duke University Press.
- Alexander, J. M., & Mohanty, C. T. (2010). Cartographies of knowledge and power: Transnational feminism as radical praxis. In A. L. Swarr & R. Nagar (Eds.), *Critical transnational feminist praxis* (pp. 23–45). SUNY Press.
- Anderson, E. (1995). Feminist epistemology: An interpretation and a defense. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 10(3), 50–84.
- Anthias, F., & Yuval-Davis, N. (1983). Contextualizing feminism: Gender, ethnic and class divisions. *Feminist Review*, 15(Winter), 62–75.
- Anthias, F., Yuval-Davis, N., & Cain, H. (1992). *Racialized boundaries: Race, nation, gender, colour and class and the anti-racist struggle*. Routledge.
- Apple, M. W. (2004). *Ideology and conflict* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). RoutledgeFalmer.
- Barsam, R., & Monahan, D. (2016). *Looking at movies* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Norton.
- Behar, R. (1996). *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*. Beacon Press.
- Bentz, V. M., & Shapiro, J. J. (1998). *Mindful inquiry in social research*. SAGE.
- BET online (2017, Jan. 5). 16 celebrities who have made horribly homophobic comments. <https://www.bet.com/celebrities/news/2017/01/05/celebrities-homophobic-comments.html>
- Bordwell, D., Thompson, K., & Smith, J. (2017) *Film art: An introduction* (11<sup>th</sup> ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Bourriaud, N. (2002). *Relational aesthetics*. Les Presses du Réel.

- Butler, J. (1990). *Undoing gender*. Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of sex*. Routledge.
- Cameron, J. (Director). (1986). *Aliens* [Film]. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox.
- Carpenter, V., & Lee, D. (2010). Teacher education and the hidden curriculum of heteronormativity. *Curriculum Matters*, 6, 99–119.
- Chavez, K. (2013). *Queer migration politics: Activist rhetoric and coalitional Possibilities*. University of Illinois Press.
- Cholodenko, L. (Director). (2010). *The kids are all right* [Film]. Features.
- Chow, R. (2002). *The protestant ethnic and the spirit of capitalism*. Columbia University Press.
- Chuba, K. (2018, March 1). Francis Coppola helps Paramount dedicate building to pioneer director Dorothy Arzner. *Variety*.  
<https://variety.com/2018/film/news/dorothy-arzner-paramount-building-francis-coppola-1202715056/>
- Columbus, C. (Director). (2002). *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* [Film]. Warner Brothers.
- Cook, D. A. (2016). *A history of narrative film* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Norton.
- Cook, P. (1975). Approaching the work of Dorothy Arzner. In C. Johnston (Ed.), *The work of Dorothy Arzner: Toward a feminist cinema* (pp. 9–18). British Film Institute.
- Cook, P. (1999). *The cinema book* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). British Film Institute.
- Corrigan, T., & White, P. (2018). *The film experience: An introduction* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1, 139–167.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review* 43(6), 1241–1299.



- de Lauretis, T. (1994). *The practices of love: Lesbian sexuality and perverse desire*. Indiana University Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus* (B. Massumi, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Diawara, M. (1993). Black spectatorship. In M. Diawara (Ed.). *Black American cinema*. (pp. 211–220). Routledge.
- Doty, A. (2000). *Flaming classics: Queering the film canon*. Routledge.
- Douglass, F. (1845). *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave*. Anti-Slavery Office.
- Epstein, R., & Friedman, J. (Directors) (1995). *The celluloid closet* [Film]. Sony Pictures Classics.
- FAIR Education Act: LGBTQ-Inclusive Lessons and Activities. (n.d.).  
<https://gsanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/FAIR-Education-Act-Lessons-Activities.pdf>
- Fairclough, N. (2001). Critical discourse analysis as a method in social science research. In R. Wodak & M. Myer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 121–138). SAGE.
- Fairclough, N. (2014). *What is CDA? Language and power twenty-five years on*.  
[https://www.academia.edu/8429277/What\\_is\\_CDA\\_Language\\_and\\_Power\\_twenty-five\\_years\\_on](https://www.academia.edu/8429277/What_is_CDA_Language_and_Power_twenty-five_years_on)
- Fine, M. (1991). *Framing dropouts: Notes on the politics of an urban public high school*. SUNY Press
- Fleischer, R. (Director). (1975). *Mandingo* [Film]. Dino De Laurentiis Company.
- Fleming, V. (Director). (1939). *The Wizard of Oz* [Film]. Warner Brothers.
- Freire, P. (2001). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*. Rowan & Littlefield.
- Fuss, D. (1992). Fashion and the homospectatorial look. *Critical inquiry*, 18(4), 13–32.
- Gee, J. (1989). Literacy, discourse, and linguistics: Introduction. *Journal of Education*, 171(1), 5–17.

- General Assembly of North Carolina. Session 2017. (2017, April 11) *HOUSE BILL DRH10214-MM-60 (03/14)*  
<https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017/Bills/House/PDF/H780v0.pdf>
- Gerima, H. (Director). (1993). *Sankofa* [Film]. Channel Four Films.
- Gheyle, N., & Jacobs, T. (2017). Content analysis: A short overview. *Internal Research Note*. <https://doi:10.13140/RG.2.2.33689.31841>.
- Giannetti, L. (2018) *Understanding movies* (14<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pearson.
- Giroux, H. (1978). Developing educational programs: Overcoming the hidden curriculum. *The Clearing House*, 52(4), 148–151. [www.jstor.org/stable/30185121](http://www.jstor.org/stable/30185121)
- Giroux, H. (2011). *On critical pedagogy*. Bloomsbury.
- GLAAD Media Reference Guide (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). (2016). <https://www.glaad.org/reference>
- Glossary of Education Reform. (2015). <https://www.edglossary.org/hidden-curriculum/>
- GLSEN. (2019). <https://www.glsen.org/>
- Gordon, A. (1997). *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Gorski, P. C., Davis, S. N., & Reiter, A. (2013). An examination of the (in)visibility of sexual orientation, heterosexism, homophobia, and other LGBTQIA+ concerns in U.S. multicultural teacher education coursework. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 10(3), 224–248. <https://doi:10.1080/19361653.2013.798986>
- Graham, D. (2018, March 24). The murkiness of Trump's new transgender military ban. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/03/trumps-new-transgender-military-ban/556445/>
- Gray, A. (2017, March 1). World economic forum. *What you need to know about LGBTQ rights in 11 maps*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/03/what-you-need-to-know-about-lgbt-rights-in-11-maps/>
- Greiner, M. B. (2009). Aesthetics in education. In E. F. Provenzo & A. B. Provenzo (Eds.), *Encyclopedia in the social and cultural foundations of education*, (pp. 23–25). SAGE.

- Guidroz, K., & Berger, M. T. (2009). A conversation with founding scholars of intersectionality: Kimberlé Crenshaw, Nira Yuval-Davis, and Michelle Fine. In M. T. Berger & K. Guidroz (Eds.), *The intersectional approach: Transforming the academy through race, class, & gender* (pp. 61–78). The University of North Carolina Press.
- Hansen, M. (1991). *From babel to Babylon: Spectatorship in American silent film*. Harvard University Press.
- hooks, b. (1992). *Black looks: Race and representation*. South End Press.
- hooks, b. (2010). *Teaching critical thinking: Practical wisdom*. Routledge.
- Jenkins, B. (Director). *Moonlight* [Film]. A24 Productions.
- Kaufman, M. (Director). (2002). *The Laramie project* [Film]. Cane/Gabay Productions.
- Kay, K., & Peary, G. (2011, July 16). Agnes film - Interview with Dorothy Arzner. In A. Hidalgo (Ed.), *Agnes films: Supporting women and feminist filmmakers*. <http://agnesfilms.com/interviews/interview-with-dorothy-arzner/>
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2007). Critical pedagogy in the twenty-first century: Evolution for survival. In P. McLaren & J. L. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Critical pedagogy: Where are we now?* (pp. 9–42). Peter Lang.
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2008). *Critical pedagogy primer* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Peter Lang.
- Kincheloe, J. L., McLaren, P., & Steinberg, S. R. (2012). Critical pedagogy and qualitative research: Moving beyond the bricolage. In S. Steinberg & G. S. Cannella (Eds.), *Critical qualitative research reader* (pp. 14–32). Peter Lang.
- Kozuch, E. (2019, January 31). *2019 State equality index*. <https://www.hrc.org/blog/hrc-releases-2018-state-equality-index>
- Kress, G. (2014). Discourse analysis and education: A multimodal social semiotic approach. In R. Rogers (Ed), *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (pp. 205–226). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>
- Lawrence, F. (Director). (2013). *The hunger games: Catching fire* [Film]. Lionsgate.
- Lawrence, F. (Director). (2014). *The hunger games: Mockingjay pt. 1* [Film]. Lionsgate.
- Lawrence, F. (Director). (2015). *The hunger games: Mockingjay pt. 2* [Film]. Lionsgate.

- Layden, T. (2018, May 7). Cast aside: A new ruling on gender eligibility appears targeted. *Sports Illustrated*, 128(10), 23.
- Lee, A. (Director). (2005). *Brokeback mountain* [Film]. Focus Features.
- Lee, S. (Director). (1989). *Do the right thing* [Film]. 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks.
- Lee, S. (Director). (1991). *Jungle Fever* [Film]. 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks.
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Resource Center. (n.d.). General definitions: Homosexuality. University of California San Francisco.  
<https://lgbt.ucsf.edu/glossary-terms>
- Macgillivray, I. K., & Jennings, T. (2008). A content analysis exploring lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender topics in foundation of education textbooks. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(2), 170–188.
- Mahmood, S. (2004). *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Princeton University Press.
- Manning, E. (2016). *The minor gesture*. Duke University Press.
- Marcuse, H. (1978). *The aesthetic dimension: Toward a critique of Marxist aesthetics*. Beacon.
- Marshall, G. (Director). (1988). *Beaches* [Film]. All Girl Productions.
- Mayne, J. (1994). *Directed by Dorothy Arzner*. Indiana University Press.
- Mayring, P. (2000). Qualitative content analysis. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(2), <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0002204>.
- Metz, C. (1975). The imaginary signifier. *Screen*, 2(16), 14–76.
- Moreau, J. (2018, January 7). *Republican backed bill alarms LGBTQ advocates*.  
<https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/republican-backed-education-bill-alarms-lgbtq-advocates-n845591>
- Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. In L. Braudy & M. Cohen (Eds.), *Film theory and criticism* (pp. 711–722). Oxford University Press.
- Mulvey, L. (1981). Afterthoughts on ‘Visual pleasure and narrative cinema,’ inspired by *Duel in the Sun*. *Framework*, 15(17), 29–38.

- Muñoz, J. (1999). *Disidentifications: Queers of color and the performance of politics*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Muñoz, J. (2013). *Disidentifications: Cultural studies of the Americas* (Book 2). University of Minnesota Press.
- Myer, M. (2001). Between theory, method, and politics: Positioning of the approaches to CDA. In R. Wodak & M. Myer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 14–31). SAGE.
- Myerson, M., Crawley, S. L., Anstey, E. H., Kessler, J., & Okopny, C. (2007). Who's zoomin' who?: A feminist, queer content analysis of "interdisciplinary" human sexuality textbooks. *Hypatia*, 22(1), 92–113.
- Nash, J. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review*, 89, 1–15.  
<https://doi:10.1057/fr.2008.4>
- National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. (2017). *A crisis of hate: A mid-year report on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer hate violence homicides*.  
<http://avp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/NCAVP-A-Crisis-of-Hate-Final.pdf>
- Nussbaum, E. (2019). *I like to watch: Arguing my way through the TV revolution*. Random House
- Oparah, J. (2011). Maroon abolitionists: Black gendered-oppressed activists in the anti-prison movement in the US and Canada. In N. Smith & E. A. Stanley (Eds.), *Captive genders: Trans embodiment and the prison industrial complex* (pp. 293–322). AK Press.
- Pêcheux, M. (1982). *Language, semantics, and ideology*. St. Martin's Press.
- Peirce, K. (Director). *Boys don't cry* [Film]. Fox Searchlight Pictures.
- Peters, J. (2014, March 21). The decline and fall of the "H" word. *The New York Times*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/>
- Phelan, S. (2017). Critical discourse analysis and media studies.  
[https://www.academia.edu/34124822/Critical\\_discourse\\_analysis\\_and\\_media\\_studies](https://www.academia.edu/34124822/Critical_discourse_analysis_and_media_studies)
- Polan, D. (2007). *Scenes of instruction: The beginnings of the U.S. study of film*. University of California Press.
- Pramaggiore, M., & Wallis, T (2011). *Film: A critical introduction* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Pearson.

- Preminger, O. (Director). (1954). *River of no return* [Film]. Twentieth Century Fox.
- Puar, J. K. (2007). *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times*. Duke University Press.
- Rancière, J. (2009). *Aesthetics and its discontents*. Polity Press.
- Rees, D. (Director). (2001). *Pariah* [Film]. Chicken and Egg Productions.
- Reitman, J. (Director). (2007). *Juno* [Film]. Fox Searchlight.
- Rethinking Schools. (n.d.) <https://rethinkingschools.org/>
- Rich, R. B. (2013). *New queer cinema: The director's cut*. Duke University Press.
- Rogers, R. (2014). Critical approaches to discourse analysis in educational research. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (pp. 1–20). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>
- Ross, G. (Director). (2012). *The hunger games* [Film]. Lionsgate.
- Russo, V. (1981). *The celluloid closet: Homosexuality in the movies*. Harper and Row.
- Sarris, A. (2009). Notes on the auteur theory in 1962. In L. Braudy & M. Cohen (Eds.), *Film theory and criticism* (pp. 451–454). Oxford University Press.
- Shapiro, S. (2006). *Losing heart: The moral and spiritual miseducation of America's children*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Silverman, K. (1983). *The subject of semiotics*. Oxford University Press.
- Silverman, K. (1992). *Male subjectivity at the margins*. Routledge.
- Sopelsa, B. (2018, May 6). *Two transgender women found dead in Dallas in less than a week*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/two-transgender-women-found-dead-dallas-less-week-n874721>
- Spade, D. (2011). *Normal life: Administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limits of the law*. South End.
- Stambler, L. (2009). Beneath the surface. *DGA Quarterly, Fall*. <https://www.dga.org/Craft/DGAQ/All-Articles/0903-Fall-2009/Feature-Social-Activist-Documentaries.aspx>

- Straayer, C. (1996). *Deviant eyes, deviant bodies: Sexual re-orientations in film and video*. Columbia University Press.
- Sturken, M., & Cartwright, L. (2009). *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Tate, U. K. (n.d.). Relational Aesthetics. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/r/relational-aesthetics>
- Teaching for Change. (n.d.). <https://www.teachingforchange.org/>
- U.S. Department of Justice: Civil Rights Division and U.S. Department of Education: Office of Civil Rights (2017) Dear Colleague Letter. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201702-title-ix.pdf>
- USC Cinematic Arts (2106). USC cinematic arts history. <https://cinema.usc.edu/about/history/index.cfm>
- Wallace, M. (1993). Race, gender, and psychoanalysis in forties film: *Lost Boundaries*, *Home of the Brave*, and *The Quiet One*. In M. Diawara (Ed.), *Black American cinema* (pp. 257–271). Routledge.
- Warner, J. (2018). *Why they can't write: Killing the five paragraph essay and other necessities*. John Hopkins University Press.
- Weheliye, A. G. (2014). *Habeas viscus: Racializing assemblages, biopolitics, and black feminist theories of the human*. Duke University Press.
- Welles, O. (Director). (1941). *Citizen Kane* [Film]. RKO Pictures.
- Wexman, V. (2009). Media studies and the academy: A tangled tale. *Cinema Journal*, 49(1), 140–146.
- Whedon, J. (Producer). (1997). *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* [Television Series]. The WB.
- Wodak, R., & Myer, M. (Eds.). (2001). *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. SAGE.
- Wynter, S. (1990). Beyond Miranda's meanings: Un/silencing the 'demonic ground' of Caliban's 'woman.' In C. Davies & E. Savory (Eds.), *Out of the kumbla: Caribbean women and literature* (pp. 355–370). Africa World Press.
- Zeigler, C. (2018, January 6) *Pro rugby player apologizes for gay slur, faces suspension*. <https://www.outsports.com/2018/1/16/16895296/mathieu-bastareaud-gay-slur-france-rugby>